

Social Media and Social Change in a Bahian Working Class Settlement

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I, Juliano Andrade Spyer, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis results from fifteen months of fieldwork in a working-class settlement located near an international touristic region within Bahia in the Northeast of Brazil. It addresses two main objectives: to offer an ethnographically-based description of the use of social media by working class Brazilians, and to examine the consequences of this use in relation to social change.

The main theoretical framework I use comes from the field of linguistic anthropology. I examine locally traditional forms of communication that the anthropological literature calls ‘indirection’, a form of opaque speech that creates private spaces of interaction in situations of dense sociality. Indirection has been studied in postcolonial contexts as a means to protect socially vulnerable subaltern from everyday situations of conflict. The thesis moves from face-to-face uses of indirection to examine digital media enabling new possibilities for opaque communication. I also draw from this and other literature (analysing visual postings online) to posit that ‘private’ and ‘public’ are problematic notions to describe how my informants understand and use social media, so I propose as alternative the ethnographically-based notions of ‘lights’ on and ‘lights off’.

Locals use the term ‘addiction’ to express the fascination they have for Facebook and WhatsApp, but while the Internet seems to symbolise modernity and prosperity, social media is used mainly for hidden acts of communication such as spreading rumours, gossiping, and for spying on each other. This suggests that, while appearing to be transformative, social media also reinforces forms of relations common in dense sociality such as the use of social control mechanisms. As such I posit that social media also serves the purpose of resisting changes associated with the expansion of formal work, the increasing presence of the state and the growing influence of Protestant Evangelical churches in low-income localities.

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Antonio Balduino had always had great scorn for those who worked. He would have preferred to kill himself one night in the harbour than to work [...]. But now the Negro viewed workers with a new respect. They could quit being slaves.

Jubiabá, Jorge Amado

Introduction

Answers to why we, as humans, are attracted to the Internet tend to refer to its 'revolutionary' transformative power. The emergence and popularization of online communication is commonly framed in relation to ideas such as modernity, democratization of knowledge, individual empowerment and prosperity. For example, Rainie and Wellman (2012) argue that digital communication frees individuals from constraints that traditional social relations impose. Castells (2011) analyses how online networked coordination creates new forms of political activism. Ito et al. (2009) concluded that digital media expands the possibilities that individuals have to learn informally through collaboration and practice. Governments and organizations focused on development recurrently discuss digital media in relation to its potential to reduce but also expand socioeconomic divisions (e.g. Cetic.br 2015). My thesis, however, builds on the problematization that Scalco (2012:42-43) raised in Brazil. She invited scholars to break

away from the moralizing discourse surrounding internet access and socioeconomic exclusion and move away from an idealized view of the 'revolutionary internet'. Scalco instead suggests that we 'pay attention to other logics and uses' that this low-income population have for being online. This thesis provides ethnographic data and proposes analytical tools to further understand how these Brazilians see and use social media.

The field site where I lived – I call it Balduíno – is undergoing a rapid process of urbanisation and development as, in the context of neoliberal economic expansion, it is located within a region that recently became one of Brazil's important tourist destinations. Growing opportunities of work attracted thousands of low-income families, whose presence transformed old rural villages into dormitory neighbourhoods now hidden in the outskirts of its gentrified areas. This thesis analyses the impact social media has on these families as, within the last decade, the internet has become an important aspect of their lives.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first three chapters explore the ways in which low-income Brazilians use and understand social media. It relates these ethnographic observations to our knowledge of the historic and socioeconomic background of this population. Each of these chapters presents 'landscapes' or broad views: of the settlement (Chapter 1), of how locals communicate (Chapter 2) and of the different types of visual content they exchange (Chapter 3). The second part of the thesis then focuses on specific aspects of these people's lives. The questions with which these chapters engage include: is social media affecting traditional family relationships, in which women tend to be subordinate to men and younger people are expected to obey older relatives (Chapter 4)? Is social media a new channel for students in these poor neighbourhoods to connect with people beyond their socioeconomic circles, enabling them to access new knowledge and information resources (Chapter 5)? And finally, considering the growing importance of evangelical Christianity in Brazil as a whole and particularly among low-income people, in what ways do evangelicals use social media differently to others (Chapter 6)?

One aspect of how the people of Balduíno communicate is their ability to modify their speech to limit the understanding of some sensitive conversations, even when these take place surrounded by people. This phenomenon, discussed in chapter two, is not related to computer technologies. It rather involves a technique of omission, by which people leave out sufficient context from conversations to permit only those with intimate knowledge of

the subject under discussion to understand what is being said. Linguistic anthropology has studied this practice among populations of similar background to my informants and uses the jargon of 'indirection' to refer to it. I argue that this traditional strategy of communication became an important part of how people in Balduino interact online.

A related finding about how locals use social media is that, instead of having particular domains to meet different types of contacts, they appreciate the way that a social media platform such as Facebook brings them together quite indiscriminately with everyone else who uses the same platforms. Additionally, they do not use privacy settings to limit access to the content they upload or share. What locals put on Facebook is seen by their online 'friends', but it is also available to anyone with an internet connection. After six months building relationships in Balduino I was gradually let into the more trusted exchanges that take place in private-facing social media such as Facebook chat and WhatsApp. I compare these two sides of online interactions – public and private-facing – with the way my informants communicate differently depending on where they are geographically: in central or peripheral areas of the settlement. As I discuss in chapter three, this analysis suggests that the notions of 'public' and 'private' I had in mind do not help to portray their ways of using social media, so I propose alternative ones.

Low-income Brazilians, far from failing to understand the consequences of internet exposure, actually showed quite an immediate and spontaneous appreciation for the possibilities of social media. This in turn explains why they have been broadly responsible for their own digital inclusion. To better appreciate this phenomenon, we move from the general background presented in chapters one to three to apply a theoretical toolkit based on linguistic anthropology to focus on specific themes. This toolkit allows us to examine the uses of social media in relation to intimacy, education and work, as well as religion. Based on the analysis of the common ways in which locals in Balduino are communicating through social media, the thesis indicates that there are three main reasons why these Brazilians are so positively disposed towards online sociality.

The most obvious reason is that social media is economically advantageous for them. Locals are constantly updating themselves on the intricacies of the different data plan schemes currently available on the market. Having often limited amounts of data to exchange per month, they set up their mobiles to upload or download files only when the

phone is connected to a Wi-Fi network. They are keen to discover the Wi-Fi passwords of the places they work or of their schools, and to share this information with others. They also know of locations that have free Wi-Fi. At their homes, it is common to find broadband plans to which one person subscribes, but which is in fact paid collectively with the other families living in the vicinity. Consequently, having access to social media does not only make communication with distant relatives cheaper and more interesting; it also helps those who are communicating with family members and neighbours (by voice or text) to spend less than they would with mobile phone calls.

Using social media is also associated with practices of conspicuous consumption. The increased popularity of social media in Brazil that took place in the mid-2000s coincides with a period of shared prosperity in the country, which effectively lowered society's great inequality gap. This is when the inaccurate term 'new middle class' eventually came to symbolise this widely shared realisation that the low-income population could become avid consumers. Low-income families perceive the purchase of a computer as a suggestion that its owners are benefiting from formal employment and/or have access to bank credit. These first computers to arrive in family homes, bought through the payment of countless instalments, are often placed in the living room, allowing its symbolic prestige to be appreciated by passers-by.

Social media is one step beyond other products in terms of encapsulating prestige, as the very use of social media implies the acquisition of a certain level of literacy. Chapter five reveals evidence of how, in contrast to the repeated claims from their teachers, students in Balduino improved their reading and writing skills because they are afraid of shaming themselves with grammar and spelling mistakes online, when they are 'in front of everybody'. However, this is not to say that social media is remedying the very serious problems concerning public education in the country. Though it is perceived locally as a source of information and knowledge, it often does not encourage locals to study in ways that would advance their careers.

The ethnography indicates that it is evangelical Christianity that promotes values associated with modern life and growing affluence (Chapter 6), such as cultivating nuclear family structure or investing in education. Compared to this, the role of social media is much more ambiguous. When associated with morals nurtured together with Protestantism, social media use reflects people's efforts to acquire cosmopolitan tastes. But

it is misleading to look at social media's popularity only as a consequence of its practical advantages or of its modern symbolism.

The lives of these locals have been changing rapidly. Adults today talk about a time in which money was rarely seen as locals would crop, fish and barter parts of their production to acquire things like sugar, coffee or fabric. In 30 years, the area has gone from not having running water and electricity to being connected to the world through cable television and broadband. They went from having one Catholic chapel and a few *candomblé* yards to the presence of over twenty different Protestant organizations within the settlement. Similar transformations took place in relation to transportation and urbanisation. However, although people welcome many of these changes, the situation requires them to adapt their ways of living (for example, mothers leaving their children to work outside the home) and to face considerable new challenges, including the growth of violence related to crime. As chapter five describes, the government services are more present than ever in Balduino, but locals still feel (and indeed are) marginalised and insecure. Local schools are problematic places: many families distrust teachers and resent the associated lack of motivation among those working in these communities. Instead of being perceived as places to improve one's career options, schools are treated more like day-care centres in which young people are looked after while their parents work. Similar deficiencies exist in terms of public health and police services.

Social media is often related to other forces of transformation such as the increasing presence of the state, the economic stability provided by formal employment, the growing influence of Protestantism (and its promotion of literacy and individualism) and the overall expansion of transportation and communication infrastructures. But, as a consequence of so many changes, those living in Balduino also feel insecure and consequently more dependent upon extended families and support networks to improve their living conditions, be protected from violence, receive support during situations of unemployment, find work opportunities and look after their offspring, among other things.

Considering this context, we see how the popularity of social media derives also from the possibilities it opens for people to retain the type of dense social relations that migration and new modalities of work are diluting. If they are migrants, they can now use social media to cultivate bonds within the locality and manage family relations in a different context – one in which the extended family is not as physically present. It also

offers alternative ways for them to remain in touch with relatives living elsewhere. While they are working or running errands outside of the settlement, social media enables them to remain in touch with local friends and relatives – to be present in the settlement while being physically absent. By gossiping, sharing problems, jokes and religious commentaries, they demonstrate their mutual interest and availability to each other. It is the circulation of such gossip and rumours that delineates the limits of those belonging to this community. This alternative view also explains the enthusiasm they show for using social media to spy on each other and to spread rumours. Because that is an environment where everyone is constantly observing and gossiping about everyone else, digital media provides ways for them to exchange sensitive information secretly with chosen peers – as they did and do traditionally through indirection.

Fundamentally, then, this thesis will argue that social media has been adopted so rapidly and intensely by this population not only for representing modernity, progress and individualism, but because it also strengthens traditional forms of social relations that in many ways are the opposite of those very things.

1

Context

1.1 Choosing a location

This study of how low-income Brazilians understand and use social media took place in Bahia, a state located in the Northeast region of the country and the centre of the first two hundred years of Portuguese colonial presence in South America. The Northeast has today the highest inequality rate in Brazil¹. Nearly one third of Brazilians live in this region, out of which 72% are non-white, 80% belong to the lower economic strata (classes C, D and E)² and 88% still depend on the (often poorly rated) national health care system (SUS)³. It is the only region in Brazil in which the middle class is not predominant and, despite

¹ In 2012, the Northeast scored 0.54 in the Gini coefficient; the other regions are North (0.53), Centre-West (0.51), Southeast (0.50) and South (0.47). Source: Plano CDE / IPEADATA.

² Source: Plano CDE / IBGE PNAD 2012.

³ Source: Plano CDE / DATASUS / IDB 2012

massive migrations to the southern cities in the 20th century, 27% of its population still live in rural areas – half of which are among the poorest in the country⁴.

Income, schooling, and race further attest the colonial socioeconomic roots of the Northeast's segregate society. Those at the top of the social ladder are predominantly white (49%) and have spent on average 11.2 years at school. At the middle, 70% are black or mixed and have spent 6.1 years at school. Those with the lowest income are 78% non-white and went to school for an average of only 4.6 years⁵. Yet, it is also the region that has mostly shown signs of socioeconomic improvement during period of rapid economic growth in the 2000s. The size of middle-income groups in the Northeast grew from 28% of the population in 2002 to 45% ten years later; and out of the total population of 56 million in the Northeast, 18.6 million are part of this emergent working-class strata⁶ also known nationally as 'class C'.

One of the outcomes of this period of prosperity and general economic development in Brazil shows in its declining illiteracy rates: while 1/3 of the population over 50 years old cannot read or write, this is true for only 2.1% of teens between ages of 15 and 17. This reduction results from incentives such as social welfare programmes requesting proof of schooling as a condition for impoverished families to receive government aid. Functional illiteracy dropped by 10% from the early 2000s to represent about 30% of Brazilians in 2015⁷. However, Brazilians still have a long way to go to close the nationwide gap in relation to schooling, separating the affluent middle and upper classes and those in the lower socioeconomic strata. Of the remaining population that is considered functionally literate, less than 10% are fully capable of reading and interpreting written content from books, newspapers and magazines.

⁴ Source: Plano CDE / IBGE PNAD 2012.

⁵ Source: Plano CDE / IBGE PNAD 2012.

⁶ During the 2000s, the economic growth of BRIC countries projected the term 'new middle class' referring to lower income populations emerging as consumers. Neri (2008, 2011) posited that, because the earnings of Brazil's class C are in the middle ground between the affluent and the poor, class C represented Brazil's middle class. This understanding of middle class that is only based on earnings disregards 'cultural values, and people's subjective experience' in relation other groups in society (Torresan 2012:115). Consequently, anthropologists such as Yaccoub (2011) and Almeida (2015) and other social scientists (Pochmann 2012, Souza 2012) have since contested Neri's analysis explaining that the socioeconomic profile of this population represents that of a working class.

⁷ Nexo Jornal, 2016. A evolução do analfabetismo funcional no Brasil. Source: Plano CDE / Todos pela Educação/ IBGE PNAD 2012.

1.1.1 The field site

As part of the methodological choices to compare our data, the *Why We Post* research group⁸ decided to move away from traditional units like village and town and look to the new kinds of 'in between' settlements where people increasingly live today.

Often we frame the living space divided between urban and rural and yet this understanding does not include places like exclusive gated communities (Low 2001; Caldeira 1996) located in suburbs or 'isolated urban areas' like my field site, which are physically separated from the county's centre and yet most of its inhabitants are not associated with rural activities such as cropping or fishing⁹. Furthermore, the relatively small size of these places in relation to cities helped us to compare locals' communication happening both on and offline. Many locals work for hotels and other businesses outside of the settlement, but besides that they have routine activities such as going to school, visiting friends, shopping, attending religious services or drinking at bars near their homes.

The settlement where I conducted fieldwork is located only about 100 Km to the north of the city of Salvador, the capital of the state of Bahia (and former colonial capital), and is legally part of the county of Camaçari. I call the settlement where this research took place by the fictional name of Balduino.

Brazil currently ranks as the forth and by far the largest most socioeconomically polarised country in the Americas and is the 13th most unequal worldwide according to the GINI index¹⁰. This relates to the country's recent colonial history, particularly the legacy of slavery. The following historic and demographic information about the Northeast and this specific region where the field site is located shows the intensity of changes happening in the past few decades at Camaçari's coastal region, which has been previously studied by Kottak (2008:3) also about the topic of social change.

⁸ My PhD research is part of *Why We Post*, a comparative study about the uses and consequences of social media. It included nine long-term ethnographies produced in eight different countries. The project ran from 2012 to 2017 with a grant from the European Research Council (ERC).

⁹ As Ojima (2007) explains, Brazil's demographic census now utilizes eight categories to describe land occupation to provide greater details beyond the categories of 'urban' and 'rural'. These are: 1. Urbanized area of a village or city; 2. Non-urbanized area of a village or city; 3. Urban isolated area; 4. Rural – urban tension; 5. Rural – settlement; 6. Rural – nucleus; 7. Rural – other agglomerations; 8. Rural – excluding rural agglomerations. However, for this thesis, I will refer to Balduino more generically as a settlement, considering that it is still transitioning from urban to rural and it is not the main urbanization of the county.

¹⁰ Index Mundi, Countries ranked by GINI index (World Bank estimate).

1.1.2 Historical context

Like its neighbours in South America, Brazil is a relatively new sovereign state. Its formation is rooted in a process of colonization conducted mainly by the Portuguese state, which arrived at its coast in 1500 and established a settlement – where today lies the city of Salvador – five decades later. Like the Spanish colonies in the Americas, the presence of the Portuguese in the New World happened side by side with the Catholic Church and Brazil still has the largest catholic population in the world. But as Fausto (2014) explains, there were also differences in the economic models implemented in the Iberian colonies. While Spain had a more urban colonial presence and a focus on mining precious metals, Portugal produced wealth in Brazil mainly through slave-based plantations that, like many of the English colonies in the New World, initially exported sugar and cotton to Europe. Given the size of the land and the importance of agriculture to the Portuguese colonial enterprise (Velho 2000:56), Brazil was the main destination of the slave trade from Africa to the Americas (Appiah and Gates 2005).

Though Bahian society was formed beyond the dichotomy of slaves and masters (Reis 1995), it was also clearly divided according to skin colour. As an institution, slavery constituted a violent form of physical and symbolic domination (Seyferth 1998), that existed legally for almost four centuries on that side of the South Atlantic (Alencastro 2000). Brazilian society, which evolved together with the use of violence by specific social actors, presents a complex balance of hierarchies and individualism (Da Matta 1991, Velho 2000:57). In the 19th century, Brazil had seven people of African ancestry for each white person. Today, blacks and mixed-race Brazilians earn on average 58% of the average salary of whites, while in the United States the earning gap is 76%¹¹.

The particularity of racial segregation in Brazil – in relation to places like the United States or South Africa – is its ambiguity. Fernandes (2015:139) asserts, regarding contemporary class relations in Brazil, that Afro-Brazilians became the 'main victim of an invisible jail, resulting from the persistency of the past'. Scheper-Hughes (1993:56-60) writes that the people of her field site in the Northeast of Brazil 'are invisible and

¹¹ The Economist, 2016. Slavery's legacies. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21706510-american-thinking-about-race-starting-influence-brazil-country-whose-population> [Accessed January 23, 2017].

discounted in many other ways. [...] Their deaths, like their lives, are quite invisible, and we may as well speak of their bodies, too, as having disappeared'. Velho (2000:57) refers to the phenomenon of widespread violence in contemporary urban Brazil as a non-explicit civil war. As Fernandes has argued (2008b:141-167), racism in Brazil often erases conflicts and differences (thus making them less obvious) by exchanging the reference of a subaltern strata for terms such as 'black' and 'negro'. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) studies on taste and distinction, Souza (2003:176-177) theorizes about invisible networks that 'disqualify individuals and precarious social groups as by-products and sub-citizens;' and he later expanded the analysis (2006).

Until very recently, race was not dealt with publicly by law. As Schwarcz (2013:24) explains, ours is 'a silent racism [...] that hides behind an apparent universality and equality of the law'. She explains that the national constitution, incorporated with the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, had no clause or explicit reference to any form of racial differentiation (Schwarcz 2013:69). If, before abolition in the late 19th century, slaves were considered property of their owners, after abolition this invisibility remained as race became 'almost a taboo topic' (Schwarcz 2013:23). The legacy of slavery has not survived explicitly here as it has in South Africa and the United States, but through a gradual hierarchy of prestige based on criteria such as formal education, place of birth, gender, family background and socioeconomic class (Fernandes 2008a, 2008b), and this form of discrimination is still in practice today. Well-known present-day examples include how elevators became instruments of social and racial discrimination as buildings in Brazil often have the 'social' elevator for proprietors and their guests and the 'service' elevator for (often black and undereducated) manual laborers (Schwarcz 2013:70-71). Social mobility and economic opportunities are not associated directly with skin colour but with embracing certain moral codes (Schwarcz 2013:60) that exist mostly outside of the reach of the predominantly non-white poor.

Like other subaltern groups of the country, low-income people in Balduíno share worldviews that result from the influence of slavery and the constitution of an 'antithetical state' of personal freedom and inaccessibility to means of production (Pina-Cabral and Silva 2013:124). Finding resonance in the research of Carvalho Franco (1997) about the free population of São Paulo during slavery, Pina-Cabral and Silva (2013:124) describe this subaltern population writing that they are 'always in the condition of "weak" – both because

of being eminently mobile and in the sense that they are subjected to the favour of those dominating not only the land but controlling the State apparatus and, today, the access to credit and to consumption'. As subaltern (Spivak 1988), they do not have the same institutional protection available to the wealthier strata; they need to become less exposed to eventual attacks and situations of confrontation and still protect themselves.

1.2 Camaçari and Balduíno

While the long-lasting effects to the formation of Brazilian society include Catholicism and slavery in the context of a rural-based economy, the 1950 census information from Camaçari (Ferreira, Filho and Faissol 1958), a county neighbour to Salvador, reflects its socioeconomic and cultural proximity to Brazil's colonial roots. This official data indicates that among a population of about 13,500, there were nine people classified as brown [*pardo*] or black to each white person. The same source shows that the county was predominantly catholic with one mother church, one smaller church and six chapels in its territory. The census also mentions the existence at that time of one Assembly of God, a Pentecostal church. (It does not mention representatives of Afro-Brazilian religions such as the *candomblé*, popular mainly outside of wealthier white social circles.) Like Brazil at that time, Camaçari was predominantly rural: only 31.2% lived in urban zones and one fourth of its active population (those with 10 years old and above) worked with agriculture, livestock and/or forestry. The main industries produced charcoal, cassava flour, bricks, and bread. Horticulture and fishing are also mentioned as relevant, mainly on its coastal 'villas', each with populations of up to 900 people.

Balduíno was one of the 'villas' that the census encyclopaedia of the 1950s refers to as located in the coastal area of Camaçari County. Such micro urban hubs, all of them near riverbeds, probably have existed since colonial times¹² as local ports for boats to upload farming goods and possibly sugar from Brazil's early economic cycle. However, by the 1950's, a period of national industrialization, Bahia remained tied to a decadent agricultural model (Risério 2016:499). In the northern coast of Salvador, landowners in the region mostly used the coast to produce coconuts, a crop that is cheap to maintain and kept the land productive. As farms were abandoned or broken down to be passed on to family as

¹² Not far from Balduíno is the archaeological site of the Dias D'Avilla castle built from 1549.

inheritance, merchants established themselves in these villas to act as commercial intermediaries, taking the local production of coconut to markets in cities while bringing products to the region such as coffee, sugar, cachaça (a distillate from the sap of sugarcane) and cloth (Nazaré 1999).



Fig. 1.1: The Coconut Coast, an area transitioning from rural to urban. Relatively isolated until the 1950s, it is now an international touristic destination.

The reduced economic significance of these businesses is reflected in the types of transportation the merchant's operation used. There were no roads linking Balduino to nearby cities, so goods were either transported on the back of horses and mules or through small sailing boats [*saveiros*]. Until the 1950s, merchants walked with their cargo and trips starting at 7am ending at 4 pm, a total of 9 hours (Nazaré 1999). They usually slept in Camaçari that night to be at the market the next morning, heading back in the afternoon. Sailing journeys to Salvador and back could take weeks as it depended on favourable winds. Writing about the 1970s, Kottak (2008:6) mentions taking three hours through an unpaved road to cross 60 Km from Salvador to Arembepe, another settlement in the same area.

Today it takes roughly one hour, depending on traffic conditions, to go from Balduino to Camaçari city.

1.2.1 The people

Besides landowners and merchants, the society in settlements like Balduino in the first half of the 20th century had another component. These were people of mainly African but also of mixed (European and Amerindian) descent that lived autonomously as fishers and croppers of cassava and other vegetables in family plots surrounding the centre of the settlements. McCallum's (1999) class analysis in a similar context to contemporary Bahia provides a useful classification to the different social groups. Her informants refer to 'a relatively disempowered 'us' (variously '*o povo*' (the people); *classe média*, median class; or *classe humilde*, humble class) and a relatively powerful 'them' ('*os barões*', the barons; '*os ricos*', the rich; '*os brancos*', the whites¹³).

Even today, locals can be spotted fishing in the river using straw baskets placed in rocky slope sections of the river, a technique that descends from native Brazilian practices (Rosa Cruz 2014). Besides cropping and fishing, this population worked for farmers in temporary manual jobs (such as collecting and peeling coconuts); and exchanged with merchants scavenged products such as *piçava* (fibre and coconut), *babaçu* and *ouricuri* seeds (Nazaré 1999). As chapter four on intimacy addresses in greater detail, their lives were densely interconnected through kin and fictive kin relations, with women managing the house and raising children and men (when present), working outside of the settlement.

This ethnography focuses on this stratum of the population, which is a group that today also includes families of similar backgrounds (undereducated manual workers of African or mixed descent) that have been migrating from Salvador and the hinterland of Bahia state attracted by work opportunities associated with tourism. The distinctive element of this population is how they inhabit a subordinate/subaltern position in relation to the local elites (McCallum 2005, Pina-Cabral and Silva 2013). The settlement is near but at the same time is kept aside from the more recent presence of a gentrified strip by the ocean, and these low-income localities are generally perceived by the affluent as a necessary

¹³ As discussed earlier on this chapter in relation to race and religion in Brazil, it is significant that the poor describe themselves as 'humble' but not as 'black', while the wealthy are referred to also as 'the whites'.

nuisance. Kottak (2008:27-8) refers to a similar process of urbanization as middle and upper class families arrive and build country houses and transform a location that was virtually isolated into a neighbourhood of Salvador, while the low-income locals move to the background. Following a pattern of occupation also recorded elsewhere (Robben, Phillips and Aspelin 1982), summer homes and businesses employ the cheap labour force of cleaners, cooks, gardeners, watchmen, waiters, drivers, and builders, but are increasingly limiting the presence of these locals outside of working situations to avoid having this low-income population entering 'their' beaches.

Kottak (2008:22 and 34) refers to the contrast between the idealized perception of these settlements and the various issues that appear in the context of a long-term fieldwork. He mentions alcoholism as also being a health problem during the early years of his fieldwork in the region and refers to locals not knowing about common illnesses and how, in the 1960s and 1970s, locals needed to travel to the nearby cities to have access to hospital services. He cites recurrent problems such as malnutrition and diseases such as infectious diarrhoea, influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis, measles, and tetanus. While some things have changed through the growing presence of state infrastructure and services, new problems have arrived as a consequence of migration and unplanned urban growth such as teenage prostitution and drug dealing. Changes in diet has turned high blood pressure and diabetes into common health issues. While there is a rising addiction to crack cocaine, there has been a marked increase in sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV.

1.2.2 Demographics

According to the 2010 national census, there were 11,244 people living in Balduino including its surrounding rural vicinities and the gentrified strip by the coast. In the settlement, there are three to four people living in each house, while across the road there is one person for every three to four houses, which tend to be country houses used only on weekends, vacations and holidays. However, the official figure for the population is likely inaccurate. A more pragmatic figure is that, during fieldwork, about fifteen thousand people were living in Balduino. This is the estimate one of the local political bosses used to calculate the number of voters there during the 2012 mayoral election. This number accounts for the constant flow of temporary workers mainly from the construction industry, some of whom establish themselves there, and the population that migrate

because of the job opportunities in the leisure industry. These newcomers tend to move in renting studios or building homes in the six main squatting areas (the earliest from the mid 1980s and the most recent from 2012) that exist surrounding the centre of the settlement.



Fig. 1.2: A view of the more urbanized squatting area in Balduino

To have a more detailed profile of the people living in Balduino, it is useful to use data from other settlements in the northern coast of Bahia.

In 2005 and 2007, a local non-profit organization that provides professional training to low-income individuals to work at hotels sponsored detailed surveys of a neighbouring settlement (Reta Atlântico / Sebrae 2005, Instituto Imbassaí / ITC 2007) to learn about its main social characteristics and needs. The last survey results from interviews with 2,906 families in the end collected information about 10,399 people. Here are some highlights from these studies:

- Place of origin - besides about half that were born in the locality, 18% came from Salvador and 15% from elsewhere in the state. Less than 6% came from other states.
- Approximately 4% of the respondents had arrived in the previous year (2006) and more than one fourth had arrived between one and five years earlier (from 2002).

Between 2005 and 2007 the population growth was nearly 9% and the number of homes grew by 18%.

- In terms of education, half had not finished the nine years of our Fundamental level¹⁴ and more than half were rated as having 'poor' or 'very poor' literacy skills. Among the reasons for dropping out of school, 45% said they needed to work, 11% left school because of pregnancy, and 23% said they did not find schooling interesting.
- Among those with jobs, 59% of households had a maximum of two minimum wages (about 620 US dollars at the time).
- Approximately 80% of the population said they owned a mobile phone, a TV and a refrigerator. Only 10% said they owned a computer, though the number of computers is significantly greater today. More than 55% said they owned their means of transportation; among those, 41% had motorcycles, 34% had bicycles, and 16% had a car or a truck.
- The illness with highest rate of incidence in the population was alcoholism (1.5%).

1.2.3 Tourism, migration and urbanization

It is not surprising, given the size and impact that migration has had in the region, that it is one of the most recurrent themes of conversation in Balduino. Locals that have had families living there for some generations blame newcomers for 'taking over their settlement and contaminating it' with the pollution, greed, stress and crime usually associated with cities. This argument connects with another favourite theme, which is the decadence of family values, a subject Sorrentino (2015) examined in a similar settlement. These views are frequently discussed as locals feel that young people today are lazy and have lost the respect for their elders. They mention, as McCallum (1999) also refers to, youths' immorality, especially in relation to young women's materialism, 'promiscuity' and disconcertion for marriage. Discussions about migration are as much about blaming a category of people (as most have arrived in the past few decades) as they are about intergenerational conflicts of taste, values and worldviews.

¹⁴ The fundamental level includes 9 academic years. Students generally start at the age of 6 and finish at 14 years old. Then they have another three years of in the 'middle level', which corresponds to high school.

The theme of migration further connects Balduíno with a phenomenon of crucial importance taking place in Brazil. As Velho (2007) explains, after the Second World War, a prolonged drought affected the hinterland of the Northeast region and gave rise to a migratory process of poor rural families towards urban centres. This phenomenon was the main cause for shifting the balance of population distributed throughout the country: it was predominantly (70%) rural in the 1950s and in five decades became predominantly (80%) urban.



Fig. 1.3: Older adults tend to reject formal employment. Here a woman is working independently making straw hats to sell to tourists.

Balduíno is not a city and yet the families who move to it have the same socioeconomic background and origin as those that have been travelling to cities. It is also not predominantly rural as it is now perceived as part of the metropolitan area of Salvador. Given the national importance of the urbanization of rural areas, the national census bureau (IBGE) now uses a designation – 'isolated urban area' [area urbana isolada] (Ojima 2007) – to classify this type of transitional settlement. Joilson Souza, head of IBGE library in Bahia at the time of my fieldwork, explained that 'isolated urban areas are those that are

clearly urban, although without a connection to the main urban agglomeration,' and yet most of its inhabitants are not in productive activities related to the rural domain.

Various factors intensify the rhythms of change in the 193 Km long coastal area where Balduino is located, which is known today as the 'Coconut Coast'. In the 1950s, one of the first unpaved roads connecting Balduino and Camaçari city was built. Wealthy car owners began to purchase plots and build country houses to exit the city and spend the weekends with family and friends. In the 1960s, Arambepe, a beach locality also situated in Camaçari county, became one of the international counter-culture destinations as a free-love natural sanctuary for young hippies, being visited by artists like Janis Joplin and Mick Jagger. Reflecting the shared perception of youth visitors in the 1960s, Kottak (2008:8) writes that:

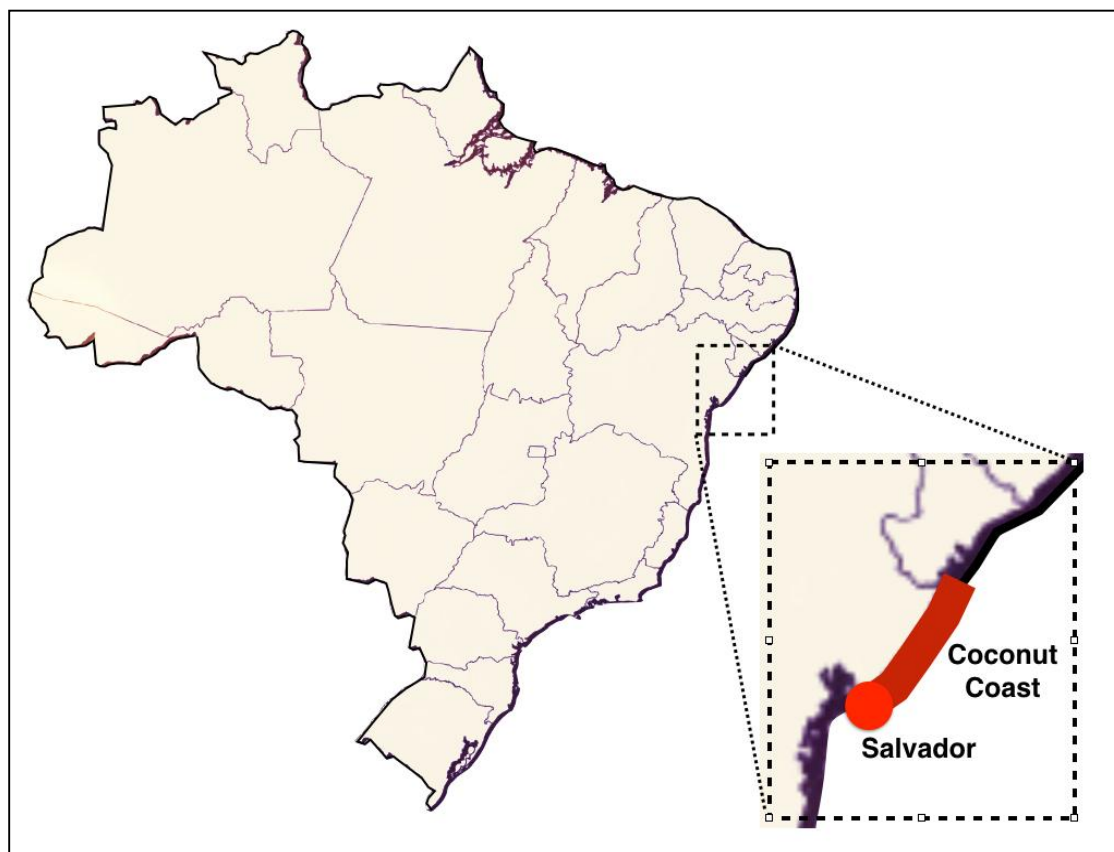
'Arembepe belonged to a movie. (Some French photographers did use the chapel as a backdrop for fashion ads that appeared in Vogue in 1966.) This conjunction of natural beauty with middle-class appeal of a 'quaint' village subsisting on a wind-powered, hook-and-line fishing industry had already drawn a handful of tourists and summer residents to Arembepe in 1962'.

The flow of people to the Coconut Coast also increased because, geographically, Salvador cannot expand to its southern coast. The opening of the Coconut Road (officially called BA-99) in the 1970s consolidated the process of development towards the north. In the 1980s, the city's population growth and the escalation of crime encouraged affluent families to move to newly built gated communities in the fringes of Salvador and commute daily to the city. *Vilas do Atlântico*, a gated affluent community developed in the outskirts of Salvador in the 1980s, represents what Caldeira (2000) has called 'fortified enclave' and Low associated with 'the discourse of urban fear' reflected in the high walls surrounding its built area.

The gradual expansion of infrastructural investment towards the coastal area to the north of Salvador brought piped water, electricity and telephony to most of the northern coast's localities, finally prompting large-scale touristic resort projects to be launched in the 1990s and 2000s. These resorts today are touristic versions of gated communities, as these vacationers prefer the safety and convenience of occasional day trips to Salvador with private drivers.

1.2.4 The settlement

This development brought highly urban characteristics to a traditionally rural environment at the Coconut Coast. Near the ocean are often swampy plains of varying widths covered by riparian vegetation [*mata ciliar*] and cut by streams that eventually form lagoons, some over one kilometre long (Rosa Cruz 2014). From this coastal area emerges the continental coastal tablelands [*baixios*]. These elevations of up to 150 meters above the sea level present the typical sandbank vegetation [*restinga*] that intertwines with the Atlantic forest under regeneration. Today the land next to the ocean is now almost exclusively occupied by affluent educated urbanites. The Coconut Road cuts through the coastal plains and separates the gentrified strip near the ocean from where settlements like Balduíno are located. Opposite the gentrified area, instead of planned housing and business infrastructure, low-income migrants often move into squatting camps.



Ima. 1.1: Map of Brazil indicating the location of the Coconut Coast, in the northern coastal area of Bahia.

Satellite images from the area reveal very different patterns of occupation on each side of the road. On the strip near the sea, streets form more or less square blocks that contain plots of regular sizes. If not hotels, they are predominantly residential areas of

gated houses with gardens, with parking areas and at times swimming pools inside. Owners use private cars to move around the town and travel regularly to and from Salvador. To most these are second homes, but some are residents that work as local business executives, independent professionals, business owners, or are retired.

Things are different as we cross the road to settlements like Balduino. Instead of sequences of regular street blocks, urbanization follows a rhizome-like pattern: a main street begins by the road and branches out into series of smaller unpaved streets. Nearer the main street is often a commercial area of pharmacies, markets, service providers and shops in general – which are usually not present in gentrified parts. At these places, homes are raised one next to the other and owners constantly expand their properties by building up to two floors above ground. In these settlements, exposed brick walls are almost ubiquitous as these expansions depend on saved money that is only occasionally available. They use public buses and vans to go to the city and walk or take the informal but popular 'moto-taxi' services (a single motorcycle used as a taxi) to move inside or near the settlement.



Ima. 1.2: Diagram of a typical settlement in the region, which is separated by the Coconut Road from the gentrified coastal strip, and indicates the centre of the old settlement and the recent squatting areas.

Kottak (2008:30) describes the arrival of affluent urbanites and the divisions in Arembepe since the 1960s:

'Previously, variations in house placement and building materials had provided evidence for slight differences in wealth, although all arembepeiros had been members of the national lower class. Beach houses with tile roofs had been concentrated in the main square and just to the north, in an area that had begun as a secondary square but was lengthening into an open rectangle. Moving north, on either side of the two parallel rows, brick houses had gradually given way to wattle and daub, and tiles to palm-frond roofs. The same change had taken place south of the central square, ... whose seaside houses were much nearer the surf than those in the north. Crude huts with palm-frond roofs had reappeared at the southern end of this street, inhabited by the poorest arembepeiros'.

But while some of the original settlements became tourist destinations – such as Arembepe and Praia do Forte – others like Balduíno were separated from the coast and have not benefited from being part of an ‘ethnic community’ as described by Grünewald (2003). Those that settle now in places like Balduíno are at the opposite condition of an ethnic community: they are a faceless, inexpensive manual workforce. This more defined socioeconomic division shows itself in Balduíno in relation to everyday rhythms: as the wealthier area gets busier during weekends and holidays, the population of the settlement is at work in restaurants, hotels and other tourist related businesses. On Mondays and Tuesdays, many of these employees have their days off and the settlement becomes livelier with cars, motorcycles, buses, people coming and going, and those gathering at bars or cafeterias [*lanchonetes*]. However, as the large hotels are now open throughout the year independent of the season, processions of private buses enter and leave the settlements transporting workers three times every day.

Work opportunities in the region are both formal and informal. As Fonseca (2000:12) noted, low-income Brazilians often prefer to work autonomously: ‘the contempt [for employment] can be interpreted as self-defence, since many ... have at some point been brutally dismissed by a potential boss’.

According to the 2012 National Census¹⁵, 56% of the low-income population in the Northeast works informally or is self-employed. Formal employment is an important topic in Balduíno especially since the late 1990s with the opening of large-scale resorts that has

¹⁵ Source: Plano CDE / IBGE PNAD 2012.

been attracting migration predominantly coming from Salvador or from the hinterlands in the state of Bahia. However, informal work is still widely present in the region. Small business depends on temporary labour during the summer months to cope with the increase in visitors. Many locals either prefer being self-employed – i.e. as motorcycle taxi drivers, builders or waiters and cooks at beach tents – or have periodic incursions in formal positions to then work informally while benefiting from job seekers' allowances.

1.3 General aspects of using social media

It is useful at this point, as I contextualize the choice of the field site, to briefly describe social media in Balduino in relation to types of access and the platforms they currently use.

The social media landscape in Balduino is very simple: people use Facebook and WhatsApp. Before Facebook there was Orkut, a now deceased Google 'social networking site' (Ellison and boyd 2007) that, similarly to Facebook, enabled users to post content openly to contacts. Before WhatsApp there was MSN Messenger, a private chat client offered by Microsoft, which provided interaction between individuals or within small groups. Facebook and WhatsApp have technical and design advantages over these predecessors, but it is meaningful that the core characteristics of Facebook and WhatsApp resemble those of Orkut and Messenger.

In Balduino today, Facebook and WhatsApp are effectively the reason that locals choose to be online - many do not make a distinction between Facebook and the Internet. Facebook and WhatsApp are useful in themselves as means of communication with other individuals and groups; they are the actual intermediary between people and content circulating online. YouTube, for instance, is largely used for entertainment and learning, but it is through the social relations on Facebook that many of its videos circulate. News pieces about everyday politics, crime and sports also acquire visibility through Facebook pages that news outlets update and locals follow and share. Both Facebook and WhatsApp allow users to easily upload and interact with visual content, which is important to a population with limited literacy skills.

Both (but particularly WhatsApp) are also useful for sharing files including video clips, voice messages and music files, and as a free substitute to phone and video calls. The more tech-savvy young users in Balduino are familiar with services that have greater importance among educated urban affluent groups in Brazil (such as Twitter, Instagram

and SnapChat), but comparatively these platforms receive little attention. Instagram is appreciated to follow celebrities like footballer Neymar, and in fewer cases to have cosmopolitan experiences of interacting with people living in foreign countries. Though SnapChat has been increasingly attracting local users, there are still few devoting regular attention to it. They do not lack the necessary equipment or the curiosity to find out about these other platforms; apparently, they choose to be where everyone else is, not just those of the same age, but also older parents and relatives.

I learned through the application of two questionnaires that locals came to use social media during the second half of the 2000s, the period when Orkut became a national phenomenon of popularity. These local early adopters were, not surprisingly, in their early teens and, given their interest to go online, a variation of internet cafés known in Brazil as *lan-houses* began to open in the settlement. These small and usually informal businesses were crucial at that point for the low-income youth to start using computers to access the Internet¹⁶. The favourable economic environment in Brazil during the 2000s and early 2010s and the expanding job market in the region, associated with the opening of larger touristic companies, made it possible for local families to begin acquiring computers, mainly in the early 2010s. Adults often talk about their computers having been purchased because of bargaining with their offspring – in exchange, for example, for them being better behaved at school. Parents want to attract their offspring away from the streets to stay at home, while also having their own interest in learning to use social media. These home computers are generally placed in the living room and used collectively by family members and friends from the neighbourhood.

The integration of computers and internet access happens in low-income families that are embedded in the context of networks of sociality (Scalco 2012:43). In Balduino, ways of purchasing the computers often involved different forms of collaboration that included, for example, borrowing another person's credit card or exchanging second-hand equipment. It was also common for families and neighbours to use the same wifi and share the costs of subscription to broadband services. Locals with closer ties also accessed the Internet from computers in the homes of friends and relatives. Young people were often responsible for teaching older relatives to use social media. Parents with lower literacy use

¹⁶ Lemos and Martini (2010) confirm this pattern in relation to other parts of the country.

social media with the help of their children or younger relatives, who create their profiles and enable their communication online by showing how to navigate services. In some cases, family members will even read the content of posts and comments aloud and then type the responses that the adults dictate.

During my fieldwork, which started in April 2013 and ended in August 2014, the interest for social media was consolidated. This is because WhatsApp, a phone application launched in 2009, became quickly popular among youth in the settlement. To use WhatsApp, locals moved to buying less expensive smartphones that ran with Google's Android as their operating system, and these phones became their actual first personal computer. With mobile internet, these locals had the first experiences of having an exclusive piece of equipment to access social media, and to use it as a 'pocket-knife communication tool'. Both portable and useful in different circumstances and needs, it is used not only to cultivate and manage social relations but also for entertainment through the intense exchange of audio, image and video files.

To close this contextualization of Balduino, then, I will add below three short ethnographic portraits with the intention of introducing typical profiles of the people I studied. These portraits consist of a local adult who was born and raised in Balduino, a migrant individual who has arrived from rural setting and a migrant family that has come to the settlement from a favela in Salvador.

1.4 Meet the people

1.4.1 A local

At 44 years old, Jorge has a solid muscular body and a warm laugh. When he is at home (always in his swimming trunks) on weekends, we often see him surrounded by friends, beer cans and bottles, and animated conversation while fish cooks on the grill (his affluent friends are treated with sashimi). A father of three adult offspring, he is a '*filho da terra*' [son of the land], meaning that his family has been in Balduino for some generations. Like the stereotypical Bahian fishermen, he carries a reputation of being a lady's man. His torso and arms display tattoos of sea animals, and mythical and Christian characters including a mermaid, Saint George and the Virgin Mary. A fan of Bob Marley, he also stands out for rebelliously refusing to sell the product of his work to hotels and affluent visitors that are

not personal friends. His fish are sold mainly to locals like him living in the settlement, and he charges less for families within his relationships that have lower incomes. Although he is illiterate, Jorge is among the very few locals from Balduino who is invited to dinners and parties at upscale homes across the road (although his partner is usually reluctant to attend them, as these occasions make her feel awkward in relation to these 'barons' [affluent]). The invitations arrive because of Jorge's charisma and the fact that he also works by taking tourists and their boats to sport/entertainment fishing trips.



Fig. 1.4: A Catholic procession.

Like many adults in Balduino, Jorge grew up attending candomblé parties and, for some years as an adult, he participated regularly in the activities of a local candomblé yard, but today he distanced himself from this experience. Often playful and loud, Jorge adopts a serious expression when talking about candomblé; he says – showing both respect and fear – that this has not been a positive experience for him and his family and that today he is satisfied with his own personal faith. In terms of religion, as many in the settlement today, the only time of the year he goes to church is during the catholic yearly festival that pays homage to Saint Francis, the local patron of fishermen. This day starts with a long singing

procession to the sea and ends with many hours of drinking, dancing and celebrating in a near-by beach and also in the settlement.

As most children in Balduino, Jorge grew up being severely beaten by his mother. One of the causes for these conflicts were the changing discourses about work in traditional fishing communities (Robben 1994). Jorge's mother rejected his insistence on identifying himself as a '*pescador*' [fisherman], a label that she dreaded because she associated this profession with a primitive and backward type of (black) person. The perception she voiced was that a fisherman does not prosper in life. She wanted Jorge to say instead he was a '*pedreiro*' [builder] as that was, for her, an exciting and 'promising profession' as it implied making money (something fishing did not really imply prior to tourism) and offering the perspective of prosperity and of becoming someone of relevance. Jorge had worked as a builder since he was a child, but he never stopped fishing, saying that he was a fisherman and speaking proudly about the freedom and privilege one experiences 'having the sea as his office'. Only four years ago, thanks to an affluent friend, he could purchase a larger boat and make fishing his only sole source of income.



Fig. 1.5: The use of digital equipment in the house.

Jorge's mobile phones are constantly at hand as they are the main form of interactive telecommunication to locals in the settlement. But he has mixed feelings about the Internet – which, for him, translates broadly to 'advanced technology'. As a fisherman, he recognizes how much easier and safer his work (staying numerous days and nights at deep sea every week) has become thanks to electronic equipment such as GPS, underwater sonars and the possibility of checking the weather forecast at anytime online – something which his technologically-savvy 20-year-old son does for him. At the same time, Jorge says – and this is a common perception low-income parents and older relatives express¹⁷ – that social media is emptying his home because other family members (all being literate) are there now in body but not in mind. Because of computers, and now smartphones, his partner and unmarried offspring are chatting continuously with others through Facebook and WhatsApp. Because he cannot read and write, he says he feels left behind by his family in his own house.

1.4.2 A rural migrant

Twenty-seven-year-old Vanessa works today as a cleaner at a fancy bed & breakfast that caters to European and North American tourists that prefer off-road small places to crowded chain hotel resorts. She is single, joined an evangelical Christian church two years ago and lives by herself in a rented one-bedroom studio in Balduíno. Recently, many new things have been happening in her life. This is the first time Vanessa has a place for herself and can own things like a laptop, a washing machine and an Android smartphone. Particularly the access to digital communication and social media represents to her a mark of becoming part of a modern world of consumption and technology that about ten years ago she could only experience indirectly as part of the glamorized lives of soap opera characters.

Her story is not different from that of many neighbours she has in the settlement: many grew up as poor peasants in farms or small family plots beginning their first work at home from 4 or 5 years old (washing, cleaning, caring for younger siblings) and then cropping from 9 years onwards. Schools in rural areas are far away and in general lack the basic infrastructure to operate and rely on teachers with limited or poor academic

¹⁷ *Why We Post*, 2016. Northeast Brazil: The plague of WhatsApp for Brazilian parents.

background. As Vanessa reached her teens in the early 2000s, she left the farm to move to a neighbouring small city and become a domestic servant. Her experience at this point reflects the conclusions of recent scholarly work (such as Rizzini and Fonseca 2002; Brittes 2016) on domestic work in Brazil and how it reinforces socio-economic distances. Vanessa slept at the homes of the families that hired her, in a tiny room by the laundry area traditionally built for these female servants. She worked from morning till night washing, cleaning and cooking plus looking after the family's small children. But after some years, the many hours of work, the lack of privacy, the complaints she heard when she left the house after work to see friends, the difficulties of going back to school at night and the various situations of psychological mistreatment she had endured piled up and she began to dream of alternative possibilities of life and work.

The chance to move out of this common type of female work came to Vanessa via a relative who 'sent a word' about a place near Salvador with an abundance of employment opportunities. 'There, one can only remain unemployed by choice,' the relative explained, echoing a phrase I heard many times there. This sounded promising and in 2010 Vanessa quit her job and took a bus to Salvador and from there to the state's north coastal area. She started living with this relative in Balduino and working as a babysitter, but gradually moved towards formal employment.

The transition Vanessa has experienced has its advantages, but it does not free her from feeling abused and exploited. She now enjoys access to government benefits such as jobseekers' allowance. Her employer provides private health insurance that is often better and more efficient than public health services. She recognizes all of these conveniences and thus has remained in the same job for the past 4 years. However, like others in Balduino, she will refer sometimes to her work conditions as 'modern day slavery'. She now has money to rent a home, pay for a gym membership, buy things and to contribute every month offering 'tithe' (a contribution in money) to the church she goes to, as that is the established practice in evangelical Christian organizations. She is continuously in contact with friends and family living near and far. But there are occurrences that make her aware of her historical condition of vulnerability in society. Having her bag occasionally searched as she leaves work - 'just like a criminal', she says angrily - brings forth the feeling of humiliation she had working as a domestic servant. And like others working at the same hotel, she defies the authority of owners in ways such as eating the food that should be only

consumed by guests. She then justifies herself saying 'I am not a lesser person than anybody, why should I eat a lesser type of food?'



Fig. 1.6: The types of hotels where the low-income people living in the Coconut Coast work.

1.5.3 A family from the city

Like every other older child or teenager in Balduino, 10-year-old Lara can hardly take her eyes off or stop using her new smartphone. At that age, she is still not bothered that her relatively inexpensive Nokia mobile is not very good at connecting to the Internet. The quality she appreciates the most is its large and visible body with a modern looking screen and keyboard. She uses it mainly to play simple action games, to take photos and to listen to music. When she is at home or with her female peers during school breaks, she uses it to play highly sexualized songs of *Pagodão* or *Pagofunk* music genres that are popular among almost everyone under 20 years old. The phone's external speakers allow Lara and her friends to practice together sensual and acrobatic dance routines, whose moves follow the action the lyrics describe. (The local most popular tune in 2013 had the following chorus: 'the pussy has the power' [*o poder está na tcheca*]). But more recently Lara is avoiding participating in these common practices among girls because she has been attending a Pentecostal church and is now part of the church's children dance group.

Lara's parents met as neighbours in a favela in Salvador. Her mother, Nadia, is a 44-year-old illiterate woman that has been working in the past few years as a cook at a restaurant for tourists across the road. Before moving to Balduino she worked mainly as a domestic servant. Her two previous partners died of health related issues and today all of her five children (four from the previous partners) still live with her. The oldest is now 27 years old and Lara became the youngest as her younger brother died at 3 years old of a heart problem. Lara's father, Jonas, is a barely literate Bahian that used to be a singer in a music group in his spare time. He retired at 43 years old due to a back injury he suffered while working as a deliverer of boxes of beer and fizzy drinks in Salvador. He is an alcoholic and spends most or all his money on cheap spirits. (As he does not work, I saw him constantly 'merry' in the settlement, walking the streets trying to borrow money from anybody he knew while singing beautifully at the top of his voice.) Nadia explained to me once that candomblé could cure him of alcoholism if he wanted to quit. But despite this problem, she says he is worth keeping as he does not beat her, is a good father to Lara, and has never sexually abused her other daughters.

It has already been 12 years since Lara's family arrived in Balduino following a job offer Jonas received to be a housekeeper. Since then, they managed to acquire a small (5 m x 8 m) plot and build a humble brick home at an older, now urbanized squatting area. But now they are squatting again. They kept their house, but moved much of their furniture to three little shacks built on a plot that they hope will eventually become the place Nadia's children will build their homes.

There are locals living in better conditions in Balduino, particularly those who inherited plots of land, work on public service or have consolidated their employment situation at a tourism-related business and have steady incomes, access to work and government benefits. Though there are also families living in worse situations than Lara's. These are generally people that arrived recently, do not have a local network of support, and are living in newer squatting areas where crack cocaine is increasingly taking the place of cheap cachaça as the drug of choice while sexually transmitted diseases including HIV spread silently.



Fig. 1.7: The types of dwellings that exist in the newest squatting area.

I end the chapter analysing how locals perceived my presence during the period of fieldwork. At the end of the thesis, at an appendix, the reader can find out my methodological choices while conducting research and the precautions I took to use the often personal information I recorded from the many interactions with locals.

1.5 Social media and otherness

In the settlement's everyday context of general informality, political figures support squatting in exchange for votes and the police have a scheme to charge fees so that construction companies collect sand at an abandoned area near the settlement.

Motorcycles, the most common private means of transport, are rarely purchased legally and their owners generally do not have the literacy and/or the money to complete the training and pass the driver exam. Many locals rely on informal work or have informal small businesses making and selling food in the streets. In the main street, butchers and seafood stands sell raw products that sit on tables without refrigeration equipment. These are only examples of how informality is part of how the settlement exists. Under this

delicate circumstance, to many locals in the early months of fieldwork, I was an unknown white man, without a clear occupation, spending time wandering around and asking people questions. It is not a surprise that rumours began to circulate that I was an undercover federal police agent.

After some months living there, I was told that local drug dealers were ‘worried about my presence’. Close friends from the settlement confirmed hearing the rumours about my ‘hidden’ identity as a member of the federal police. Reflecting about this perception, I realized – similarly to Scalco’s fieldwork experience (2012:37) – that locals had been so eager to accept my initial Facebook friendship requests so that they could have access to my profile to spy who my contacts were and what we talked about. But fearing that feeding on this rumour could both compromise the research and put my wife and I in danger, I stopped visiting local squatting areas in the field site and having conversations about politics and crime. Instead, I focused on developing the relationships I had at that point, which were mainly with evangelical families – partially, at least, because they show admiration for academic scholarship, are curious about my ‘foreign’ perspective on their lives, and (different from most locals) understand what postgraduate research is and of what sociologists and anthropologists do professionally.

This did not prevent me from conducting fieldwork and establishing close bonds with non-evangelical families, including with adepts of Afro-Brazilian religions such as candomblé. I was never criticized by evangelical friends for hanging out with non-evangelicals and going to bars and parties - perhaps because of my affluent background. The affiliations of the more intimate social circle my wife and I built in the settlement reflect our religiously plural network of relations. Out of the ten families that we consider as friends and visited during leisure hours, two belong to the Assembly of God, two belong to the Baptist church, two do not have religious affiliation, one is adept of candomblé (a candomblé priestess [*mãe de santo*]), one sympathises with Buddhism, one is catholic and one is Jewish. These last three were affluent, lived in the gentrified areas across the road and were helpful as interlocutors that experience work relations as employers. I recognize that a sympathy for evangelical Christians influenced my perceptions of Balduino, yet,

because of this proximity and trust, they became important interpreters of local values and practices¹⁸.

The anthropological literature addresses class-based discriminatory practices that tend to justify poor people's socioeconomic condition based on their diversity in relation to the affluent¹⁹. The reason to refuse to accept the otherness of low-income populations, Fonseca (2000:108) explains, is the 'insurmountable pit' between the poor and the affluent in Brazil. From the advantageous position of being a U.S. national living for many decades in Brazil, Fonseca (2000:125) writes about how 'even today, the idea that there can exist among low-income groups forms of alterity that are worth analysis meets resistance in and outside the academic world'. Being of an affluent background, I also entered Balduino with my share of mostly unacknowledged preconceptions and prejudices about locals. The experience of conducting fieldwork in my country in a place I would not otherwise have lived exposed (through my notes) the kinds of perceptions that relate to tastes and values.

I recognize this type of judgement happening, for example, in my initial attempts to make sense of locals' lack of restrictions to display online what appeared to be personal 'private' experiences. During my early months in the field, I wrote in my notebook that they did not understand the dangers of using social media because of their lack of good quality education and their relatively recent presence on social media. To me, they posted so much of their private lives publicly because they could not really understand the consequences of these acts. But, as I eventually learned, this perception was based on my own views about privacy and on having only partial access to my informants' social media exchanges.

Fonseca (2006) also warns against a romantic 'missionary' motivation to do research, and looking back I identify a similar idealism in my expectation to find, during fieldwork, examples of social media contributing to reduce socioeconomic inequalities. Having spent 14 years working as a social media producer and writer, I believed the Internet was a revolutionary and empowering technology (e.g. Spyer 2007), and I saw these qualities materialized in concepts and projects such as Creative Commons licensing, open source forms of development and Wikipedia-like means to create and distribute knowledge

¹⁸ As their lives are constrained by their low-income means while they also aspire to incorporate affluent values, they were the main source I had to discuss and understand the local uses of indirection.

¹⁹ For example, see Schwarcz (2013) more specifically in relation to the topic of race, and also Fonseca (2000).

collaboratively. My interest in studying Brazilians of low-income background also reflects aspirations for democracy, citizenship and greater social equality that, as Torresan (2012) explains, motivated middle class Brazilians of my generation to emigrate during the 1980s and 90s²⁰. Because of this hope to add new evidence about the ‘revolutionary internet’, I resisted the temptation to acknowledge that much of what my informants did online – e.g. spying on each other, sharing videos of crude violence and gossiping – did not fit the techno-utopian ‘ideology of progress’ (Ribeiro 1999) associated with a Western category of development (Ribeiro 2008).

Considering this intricate background, the field of linguistic anthropology offered fresh possibilities to examine informal dimensions of local politics revealed on and through social media, including tensions happening inside homes because of gender issues and conflicts of generation, disputes resulting from the growing presence of state through teachers, police and formal employment, and the growing influence of criminal organizations and Protestant ideology.

²⁰ These motivations include an appreciation for values such as ‘individualism, citizenship, modernity and democracy’ (Torresan 2012:117), and also ‘a sense of shame and guilt for [my] privileged [position]’ in relation to most Brazilians (Torresan 2012:123).

2

Indirection

During the first 400 years after the arrival of European explorers, missionaries and colonizers, Brazil evolved mainly as an exporter of agricultural goods produced using slave labour. As chapter one described, the intense changes happening in Balduíno reflect the socioeconomic transformations of the country as a whole. In the second half of the 20th century, Balduíno existed as a difficult to reach village with a population predominantly composed of poor peasants and fishermen. The arrival of car-owning wealthy families from the nearby cities since the 1950s gradually included the Coconut Coast as part of the outskirts of the metropolitan area of Salvador. Migration of low-income workers followed the opening of work opportunities and made Balduíno into a working-class settlement to individuals – builders, cleaners, cooks, security guards – that arrive alone or with their families mainly from Salvador and the hinterlands of Bahia. Traditional forms of subsistence and bartering are progressively losing importance as more locals engage in urban types of work.

Since the 2000s, in the context of the expansion of the tourism industry and the opening of job opportunities, the use of electronic media, particularly mobile phones and internet connected computers has been an important aspect of everyday life in the settlement. Today, locals use them to interact and access information through social media services, mainly Facebook and WhatsApp. The use of these communication platforms is often associated with an 'ideology of progress' (Ribeiro 1999) and with notions such as modernity, future, innovation and disruption. The aim of this chapter, however, is to analyse aspects of how locals communicate traditionally, particularly considering the forms of social relations discussed in chapter one. In the following pages I will address two questions: first, does the 'insurmountable pit' (Fonseca 2000:108) separating low-income and affluent Brazilians influence the ways low-income Brazilians communicate? And if that is the case, do these practices help explain the enthusiasm locals show for social media?

2.1 Traditionally

'Indirection' emerged as a topic of research as part of the effort of political anthropologists to move beyond studies of discourses and practices associated with government politics to looking also at strategies of communication that interfere politically at the micro level of everyday life. In the fields of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics²¹, researchers use the term 'indirection' to describe forms of 'oblique' or 'opaque speech' that 'convey something more or different from their literal meaning' (Blum-Kulka 1987). By contrast to what is spoken directly and explicitly, indirection refers to forms of conversation in which 'meaning relies on the active participation of the audience in making sense [...] out of an utterance' (Brenneis 1986) because what is said is separated from what is communicated (Searle 1975). This form of communication can be compared, for example, to the use of euphemism, metaphor and irony, all of which rely strongly on shared context to be understood and consequently are imperceptible to audiences that are unaware of these contexts.

²¹ Lempert (2012) explains that different fields study indirectness from linguistics to anthropology to rhetoric to communication studies and that so far there has not been an attempt to consolidate and synthesize the existing research. He adds that there is not a common definition about it that all parties agree.

Brenneis (1987) refers to these language acts as 'the product not of literary creativity but of on-going cultural and individual practice' present more evidently among Afro-Caribbean people, who have historic ties with Brazil's Northeast, and Indians that migrated to Fiji in the 19th century. He also explains that these two experiences share 'conditions of immigration and of plantation life and labour' and evolved in the context of an egalitarian social sphere that is part of a larger stratified society (Brenneis 1987). This background relates to social life in Balduíno, where a more communitarian and more egalitarian group of croppers and fishers of African and mixed ancestry co-habit a broader domain of class division and segregation.

Indirection, as it has been conceptualized and discussed in edited volumes such as Brenneis and Myers (1984) and Watson-Gegeo and White (1990), are understudied in Brazil, particularly considering – as the following pages will argue – the potential it has for ethnographies that focus on race and gender relations in low-income populations²². Among the few mentions of it that I found in the literature are in Caldeira's (1988) paper examining a public conversation in an inter-class context between affluent members of a university and representatives of a workers' union. There is also Pereira's (2006) chapter about linguistic strategies by women occupying leadership positions in the corporate domain. However, these contributions are relatively difficult for Brazilian scholars to access. Caldeira's publication was released in an English-speaking journal in the 1980s and Pereira's study is part of an edited book and is not available as a journal paper. The conceptual framing of indirection is used in Portuguese and has been translated as '*indiretividade*', but is more commonly applied in Brazil by linguists.

The first step when examining indirection in communication in Balduíno is to provide an ethnographic description of this practice as I learned about it during fieldwork.

²² Gossiping is an important topic of study in anthropology and particularly in relation to low-income population in Brazil – e.g. Fonseca (2000). Gossiping is not just a linguistic act, but one that is closely related to indirection in Balduíno. As I explain ahead in this chapter and also in chapter six, one of the motivations to use opaque forms of communication is to speak with some people in a way that others cannot hear and consequently will not be able to gossip about. The genre of indirection that locals call '*indireta*', which is also presented in the coming pages, is constantly discussed in Balduíno in relation to gossiping. People often 'send *indiretas*' as a way to retaliate against a gossipier. Events that generate large interest in the settlement, particularly violent ones, are not discussed publicly, but only in face-to-face interactions, as in the case of gossip. Gossip, described locally as the act of talking about a person behind that person's back, could be described linguistically as a type of opaque communication.

2.1.1 Indirection in the context of families and neighbours

I was once visiting an evangelical Christian family and stayed with them for about two hours during an afternoon. We had lunch together at their home, chatted informally while the TV was on, laughed at life stories we shared, and eventually most of them stood up, seemingly to go back to their obligations in the settlement or elsewhere. As those who were leaving were all going towards the settlement's centre, I walked with them. This group included now only the mother and matriarch of the family and another four or five young women, among them biological daughters and others she had raised. My memory of this 10-minute walk is that we carried on having light, enjoyable conversation. As we reached the main street, a bus arrived and Michelle, the matriarch, embarked and left. Then, as our group was saying good-byes and starting to disperse, Liana, a 29-year-old that is Michelle's niece and had been with us since morning, apologised to me for having 'to endure this long family drama'.

The matter Liana referred to was that Michelle's 24-year-old daughter Andrea had hidden from Michelle that she was trying to win back the boyfriend she had dumped a few months earlier. Michelle also found out that Andrea was carrying out this project – which included online exchanges, phone calls and visits to her ex – with the knowledge and support of the other female young adults in the family. Michelle had been informed by the ex-boyfriend, who in the past had tried hard to make the relationship with Andrea work, but had since moved on to another relationship and was planning his wedding. Michelle saw this situation of going behind her back as a case of treason that could also create other types of problems for her daughter and for the family. If other locals, including the people from their church, learned Andrea was attempting to break up a relationship between another evangelical couple, rumours inside and outside of their church could be very damaging to the family's prestige and honour. Hence the discussion on how to stanch the situation having to take place despite my presence and happening so that I and others outside of that group of close female relatives could not understand the conversation.

Important to me in this event was the realization that an emotionally charged family discussion had taken place, I had been there speaking and interacting with them while it was happening, and had not noticed this parallel conversation. Michelle and the others seemed to act perfectly normally and as enthusiastically as members of that family usually

are. I had already noticed similar situations in which locals were communicating in such a way as to leave me out of the loop, and as I later brought up the subject with Michelle, she offered to talk to me about this practice known especially by women, that enables them to exchange messages secretly though not by using predetermined codes.

This type of communication informs us of a way of thinking about power and about social relations, and, as I later learned, it is also an aspect of how locals use social media.

2.1.2 General context for indirection

Indirection in Balduino relates to the desire or necessity to communicate while often being invigilated by others in the settlement. For instance, locals often say about Balduino that still today (despite the growth of the settlement) 'every person knows everyone else'. This perception is not only associated with the condition of living in a small place; it also relates to a shared expectation that everyone is constantly observing and being observed by everyone else. (I discuss this further on in the chapter about intimacy.) It happens because of the densely-interwoven sociality, the presence of kin and fictive kin living near each other, and the thin and porous separation between the inside and the outside of many homes. People are more often together in common spaces such as neighbourhoods, streets, churches and bars; they tend to have more family members around and develop ties through marriage, baptism of children, or by acquiring family-like connections because of belonging to certain professions such as fishing or organisations such as churches.

Citing the work of Kunstadter (1963) on matrifocality, Fonseca (2000:32) refers recurrently to 'networks of mutual help' [*redes de ajuda mútua*] existing and maintained mainly by adult women. In this context, conversations and noises coming from homes are constantly monitored by neighbours (2000:9-28) – to a point, for example, that in Balduino an evangelical teenager complained of his frustration of the continuous invigilation by his neighbours. He explained he could not even yell at his brother at home because neighbours would spread rumours about him being a 'fake Christian' that did not behave according to what the Bible preaches. However, it would be wrong to imply that in these circumstances privacy is non-existent and that locals do not care for and protect their intimacies. Being able to speak reservedly is such a necessary element in daily life that they have refined means to socially engineer private communication.

Out of various cases, Thin (2001) asserts that a recurrent motivation for using indirection is to establish privacy. Indirection in Balduino is mainly a way of forging privacy when there is none, simply by disguising the subject discussed in conversations. Argenti-Pillen (2003:102-132) reports of various cases in which women in southern Sri Lanka use these strategies of 'evasive' informal discourse to avoid being exposed to danger. Similarly, in Balduino, most locals, particularly women, use indirection to avoid situations of conflict at their homes or with neighbours. However, as Brenneis (1984) correctly cautions, the use of oblique and allusive speech is not only related to situations of domination, but also aims at helping maintain long-term social relations in egalitarian forms of social organization, where direct leadership is dangerous to all involved. Chapter four, on intimacy, will explain further that women like Michelle use indirection to negotiate their reputation inside informal networks of mutual help that they participate in in the settlement.

Brenneis and Myers (1984) describe language 'as a sensitive index of social relations as well as an important sort of action with material consequences'. They posit that some 'speech events [...] do not exercise power so much as they reproduce already existing relations of dominance' (Brenneis and Myers 1984). This we also observe in Balduino in relation to gender differences and how indirection both resolves and maintains the prerogative men have to impose their will for using violence. Hence women are the masters of oblique speech, and it is no coincidence that they use it as means to alienate men from participating in some more sensitive topics of conversation. As informants explained, a main reason for using indirection is to avoid tensions in different domains, such as to be able to discuss matters in the family without allowing next-door neighbours or specific family members in the house to follow what is being said.

Though I spoke with various informants about these ways in which people hide conversations, my main interlocutor on the subject was 56-year-old Rita, with whom I recorded a long interview²³. There she explained that:

'At home we use [indirection] to avoid conflict. When I come in here after having gone through an unpleasant family situation, I go [pretending to be speak to her family]: "Pay attention, everyone! How are we going to make this work? Are we going to talk about it aloud? No, so let's see how

²³ In this short video with Rita and her daughter talk about indirection in Balduino: *Why We Post*, 2016. Northeast Brazil: Context - Speaking in code.

we make this work.” So, we sit and define [again pretending to be talking to her family]: “From now on, if you want to say this, you say it this way.”

As she ends the explanation, she then thinks for a moment and adds: ‘If people could communicate like this, they’d avoid many unpleasant situations’.

As Rita further explained, women in her home can talk about men while they are present and the men will not realize. To prove her point, she recalled:

‘My mum, she is a master. My mum could fool my dad in a way that made him look ridiculous. Like when we had very little to eat at home. My dad drank [alcoholic drinks] and when he came back home, he’d eat everything. So, my mum would say [to the offspring] “if you don’t speed up your steps...” and everyone knew it meant “dad is coming, let’s eat up quick”’.

This explanation is useful as it reflects how embedded the practice is, particularly in relation to local power dynamics. The father is not there yet, but the mother does not refer to him, does not mention he is spending money at the bar while there is little food at home or say explicitly that when coming home he will eat all the food. This is what Rita recognizes as a form of cleverness because, without explicitly saying these things, this is what all their children understood: your father is spending money to get drunk and later he will eat what is left in the home.

2.1.3 Description of indirection in face-to-face exchanges

An insightful aspect about indirection in Balduino is that it does not have a local name, suggesting that the objective of rendering something imperceptible starts with the practice of not being able to directly talk about it. During fieldwork, I labelled this as 'code' [código] to be able to refer to it in conversations with locals. However, besides this not being a word that locals themselves use, it is also not a precise term to call this practice as it suggests the existence of a defined code, which is not the case. In the instances of this form of hidden communication in Balduino, there is not one defined set of coded words that substitute others in a conversation. Instead, locals apply a variety of formulas that can be combined depending on the situation, to extract as much context from the conversation as possible, making what is being said meaningful only to specific people in each circumstance.

Most locals that I inquired about this theme replied they did not know what I was referring to or would only offer superficial information, which suggests that this is both difficult to explain in words and that it is also something to be kept as a secret in relation to

strangers. As Rita admitted in an interview: 'It is hard to explain to an outsider because it became so natural to us that we don't know how to explain it, because the best [people who know how to use indirection] in our home can communicate by only looking at each other'. In other words, what constitutes indirection for them is not a set of instructions that people are introduced to at a certain age, but a practice that evolves individually and that, depending on the shared intimacy, the communication demands little and subtle changes in the face for feelings, opinions and coordination information to be exchanged.

This description matches that of other ethnographies in contexts of everyday exposition to violence in informal settlements. For example, Besnier (1985) describes the use of nouns such as 'those' and 'they' that refer to people that were not previously introduced in the narrative, so the listener must try to deduce who 'those' and 'they' are. In her study of violence in Southern Sri Lanka, Argenti-Pillen (2003:115) explains that the interpretation of the narrative depends on the knowledge and the position of the interlocutor, so 'a well-practiced deployment [of this technique] forces the audience to be an important co-author of the discourse'. A narrative about, for example, a murder that involved locals in Balduíno can be said as part of a conversation in the streets with the presence of listeners with different degrees of closeness. Using such linguistic strategies means, a significant part of the interpretation of the information depends on the previous knowledge of those listening.

But indirection also takes place in the context of home relations, among people in subordinate roles. This means that Rita can use indirection to speak to her daughters while her husband and their husbands are present. Celina, Rita's daughter, also uses indirection to speak secretly to a friend of hers when her mother is present, but, for the strategy to work, the person being left out of the conversation must not know about the context of the event being discussed. Celina says that:

'If it's something personal that I don't want her to know and she wasn't there to see it, she won't get it. Like if I had an argument with a girl at church earlier and mum didn't see it, and if I was here now with my friend Monica and my mum, and I wanted to talk about it, I'd tell Monica: "Did you see that person having an argument yesterday at church? This other girl was being so provoking, wasn't she?" Since my mum wouldn't know it was me who had the argument, she would not pick it up, just Monica and me. Because my mum wouldn't know the context. So, if she wasn't there and she did not hear from another person about it, she

wouldn't get it. But if she had heard about it, she'd say: "Yes, you are talking about yourself, right?" She would get it'.

Indirection is also part of speaking and interacting and it happens in many different instances of social life. Here is an example I heard from 39-year-old Carol, who spoke of the use of indirection during the hour before service starts in evangelical churches: during this time, evangelical Christians of the church go to kneel on the floor next to their seats to pray aloud individually, each one often having emotional and intimate conversations with God. But Carol explained that, because others are near, when she wants to say things considered humiliating or too intimate, she talks vaguely about 'a certain situation' that is happening to a 'friend' (and not to her). She laughs as she discloses this attitude, and adds that God will know what the person praying is really saying. She feels pressed to be honest to God, but does not want her neighbours to later be gossiping about her life or that of her family.

Indirection is just as important inside the home as it is outside. Scott (1990) analyses indirectness in the context of domination. Caldeira (1988: 445-6) notes that:

'the context of class reversal that would probably be significant in any society, [...] acquires special meaning in the case of a strongly stratified society like Brazil. The relationship among members of different classes in Brazil is based on various factors of recognition of social position that involves submission, use of honorific address forms, and assumption of a weaker position and so forth on the part of the working-class members. Moreover, poor people must negotiate carefully their right to talk as the social structure usually puts them in the position of listeners when interacting with members of the upper classes'.

The ethnography in Balduino also presents situations in which interaction with bosses and managers involves the use of honorific titles and other similar ways of displaying one's own submission, but it also has cases in which those in more vulnerable positions use indirection as a strategy to ridicule the powerful. Michelle, aged 46, mentions how she used to talk to the cook and babysitter who, like her, worked for an affluent English 'missus' [*patroa*] that lived in a gated community near Balduino some years ago. Michelle said that she felt mistreated when she learned that their boss would speak English²⁴ with her husband or with guests only on certain occasions, when they wanted to

²⁴ Although indirection has not been examined systematically by anthropologists studying Brazil, the use of linguistic strategies to deal with similar situations of uneven power relations appears in popular music such as Adelzonilton Barbosa da Silva's *Malandragem dá um tempo*, which is composed solely using slang and denounces snitches and police action in favelas. Bezerra da Silva, the singer who made this song famous, talks about the necessity of talking in slang in a way that is

say things about the employees of the house. She found out this was happening by noting the names of employees being pronounced, and she considered it cheating as well as a display of arrogance. She then brought this subject up with her peers when the bosses were away and proposed that they incorporated a similar strategy. One example she gave was the following: if the missus was harassing and abusing them because – for example – there was a dinner for guests later, the cook would say to Michelle: - 'Woman, didn't you take your cramp pills this morning? You are being a pain today!' And she would reply: 'Yes, I apologise, I went to the pharmacy but they were out of stock'. This practice allowed them to ridicule the bosses. And they would occasionally communicate among each other just so the bosses noticed – but could not understand – that they were talking behind their back. Finally, using indirection, they could also coordinate actions so that they would anticipate and have good excuses to reject requests to stay working extra-time.

The more people spend time together and use together this form of communication – the more people share what Zelizer's (2000, 2005) described as intimacy – the more subtle and minimalistic are the resources they need to understand each other. Like the list Moran (2002) provides, in Balduino the practice of indirection includes: attributing nicknames to refer to certain people, applying local slang words, speeding up pronunciation, changing the tone of voice, stripping contextual data (place, time), and shifting the person being talked about.

Another circumstance related to using indirection is to speak about another person who is present. Celina mentioned, for example, that one day a classmate from her university took her baby to class. The baby was very noisy and, at a certain point, one of Celina's friends sitting nearby turned to Celina with a disapproving face and complained: 'Celina, come on, this is enough (!),' as if protesting about something Celina was doing. Yet

remarkably similar to my informant Michelle. He explains during an interview (*Onde A Coruja Dorme* 2006) that 'slang is part of black culture created by slaves, as means for instance to plan an escape to a *quilombo* [a hidden settlement of runaway slaves]. They discussed that using slang [...] so that [white people] would not understand [their conversations]. It is exactly the same situation we [poor black people] live with intellectuals nowadays. They go to school [to learn all these complicated words], then they come to you and speak to you the whole day and you don't understand. [So you reply:] yes, sir, yes, sir, of course, sir, because we don't know what he said. So, what we do? We can also speak to [them] in a way that he also will sit [listening] all day without understanding anything. Then it's a draw.'

Celina understood that her friend was just expressing her frustration for not being able to concentrate at the lecture because of the noise.

The remaining part of this chapter will present and analyse cases of indirection used in social media. My starting point will be to consider the types of equipment that locals have to access the Internet and the specific affordances such equipment offers for using indirection.

2.2 Indirection online

2.2.1 Mobile phones as personal computers

One way of considering the local impact of mobile communication among low-income Brazilians is by observing the importance mobiles have beyond their practical utility (Silva 2012) and the complexity of information and knowledge locals acquire and share to take as much advantage of mobile phones as possible (Silva 2007). Mobile phones are widely used in Balduíno and this can be appreciated visually, as almost anyone has a mobile on their person, but also in the way that almost every person in Balduíno is able to describe clearly the (often complex) advantages of different mobile plans by different network providers. It is also common for people to use two or more mobile lines to be able to speak to more people paying less money²⁵. Today, as other ethnographies equally show (i.e. Madianou and Miller 2011) in the context of urbanization and broad change described earlier in the thesis, mobiles are particularly important to mothers interested in moving into the labour market while continuing to look after offspring. However, it is only recently that social scientists have begun to pay proportional attention to the importance this technology has (Castells 2008), and this is true to the world in general and to research conducted in Brazil.

The popularization of the Internet only made mobiles more necessary and present in Balduíno. To understand how, it is important to remember that the term 'personal computer' does not completely fit the context of how computers were initially used in these settlements. Before they became more affordable to the low-income population of the late 2000s and early 2010s, locals had to go to Internet cafes to access the Web, meaning that other customers of the café who were coming and going could spot another's interactions. Since the early 2010s, computers started becoming more present in the locality's family

²⁵ Calls to clients of the same providers cost less in top up pay as you go plans.

homes, but there they tend to be shared at homes and have the status of expensive furniture so the PC does not stay in a person's bedroom. It often is placed in the living room to be used collectively by the whole family and admired by visitors as a symbolic indicator of modernity and prosperity. That is why the Android smartphone (and not the PC) became the first strictly personal computer-like equipment people experienced using in Balduino. It is the smartphone that finally only belongs to one person and that generally will be treated as an individual item not available to anyone other than its owner.



Fig. 2.1: A child using a Nokia smartphone, common before WhatsApp.

Mobiles became the decisive element for locals to take on accessing the Internet more regularly. Until the second part of 2013, only some teenagers and young adults had what we could technically call smartphones in Balduino, but this equipment was mostly not used to access the Web. The most common model at that time was a Nokia phone with a non-touch screen above a physical keyboard. This eye-catching equipment – its relatively large body often increased in size by a brightly coloured case – served primarily to display a certain sense of modernity and to enable the user to listen to music, take and show photos and to exchange files via Bluetooth. Since the main reason for locals to access the Internet is social media – which, before the arrival of WhatsApp, happened mostly on Facebook –

and the Facebook app for the Nokia operational system performed poorly, very few people saw reason to use their mobile phone to go online. WhatsApp, being a native mobile application, resolved precisely these problems: it is easy to navigate on smaller mobile screens, the user can easily send and receive messages and they can also know if and when the other sees each message. Given these affordances, after early 2014 it became difficult to find a teenager or young adult in Balduino without an Android phone.

2.2.2 Indirection and social media

The popularization of mobile internet access had practical outcomes in relation, for instance, to work and to resolving practical matters, but its importance also relates to allowing people to stay in touch with their social circle. Hence my ethnography agrees with Horst and Miller's (2006) conclusion that the economic value of mobiles for the low-income population is not as important as their use in maintaining social relationships. This not only includes the affordance of being in touch with others during the time people are physically distant (as they run errands, are at work, etc.) but also allowing the creation of channels of opaque communication.

This use of mobile technology as a way of creating means of privacy only increased with social media. It is a topic that locals talk about in terms, for instance, of being now able to speak to each other regardless of physical distance. Like the use of indirection in face-to-face conversations, two locals that could easily meet face-to-face would choose to speak over the phone when at least one of them was away from the settlement and consequently from the ears of their neighbours. Also, we can note the mobile's role in allowing the use of indirection, as locals have creative solutions for their mobiles to be less exposed to their friends and partners. Having a password protecting one's WhatsApp, for example, reduces the possibility of one's close relations spying on their direct exchanges (more about this in chapter four, on intimacy.) Young people will lock their phones with highly complex and long codes (that could have a long and complex string of symbols or characters) and disguise names by using graphic alternatives so that people around will not know whom is the person calling.

This last solution is important to the use of indirection as the owner of the phone generally wants to know who is the person calling before answering, though they may not want the others that are around him or her at any given moment to know this information.

As the name of callers appears on the screen when that person calls, these young locals will write certain names applying alternative graphic characters. In the image below, for example, the informant's actual girlfriend's name 'Thailane' is written only using letters followed by an emoticon of a heart (S2), but at that same time he was flirting with another person (Thamiris), whose name he disguises with symbols (Th@m!r!s) followed by a disguised heart sign (\$2). The coming of WhatsApp only advanced this possibility by expanding the alternatives of file exchange and easy group communication for a relatively lower cost than voice conversation.



Fig. 2.2: Phone screen shows the encrypted name of phone owner's secret affair.

Locals recurrently say that in Balduino 'everyone knows [and are constantly monitoring] everyone else'. Walking on the streets in Balduino is an exercise in observation, as locals circulate, always discreetly paying close attention to who is also passing by, who they are with, what conversations they might be having and if they indicate the intention to greet them as they cross each other, or if they pretend not to see the other person and look away. In this context, locals look for alternatives and possibilities to control their exposition to what others see and hear about them.

To further discuss social media in relation to indirection in Balduino, I will draw on the work of anthropologists who have studied people exposing themselves to unknown audiences online. My aim is to argue that while private-facing social media is often portrayed as a space people use to expose themselves, it is also used to hide and protect acts of communication.

2.2.3 Hiding under the sun

Wesch (2008) discusses how producing video logs ('vlogs'²⁶) often creates a sensation of a 'collapse of context' that results from looking at the camera without knowing who might eventually watch that video. However, as Wesch then explains, the fear that results from the collapse of context gradually disappears as those posting these videos receive feedback and create a mental picture of who his or her real audience is – this is considering the large number of videos constantly uploaded and the comparatively small likelihood of one's video been seen²⁷. Media anthropologist Patricia Lange (2007) addressed a similar issue while studying the varying degrees of 'public-ness' of YouTube videos. Lange (2007:370) presents cases in which 'participants may share private experiences ... in a "public way" [but] At the same time, they use mechanisms to limit physical access to the videos or to limit understanding of their contents'. In other words, the video becomes available publicly and can potentially be seen by any person while other forms of filters, either technical or social, prevent this from happening.

Locals expose controlled content – which can be personal but not private (Lasén and Gómez-Cruz 2009) – showing environments such as the interior of homes that are not opened to non-trusted relations. This is not incidental or naïve as privacy does not need to be conceptualized as a territory with clear boundaries but as the capacity to control information about ourselves (Müller 2004). Indirection, which locals in Balduino are so used to applying to everyday situations, represents an expression of such social and technical mechanisms that Lange refers to, as they limit the understanding of conversations taking place in public spaces.

²⁶ Vlog is a neologism formed by the fusion of the words 'video' and 'blog'. It refers to a practice like blogging, but using instead of writing, videos where the person speaks to the camera.

²⁷ Donchev (2017) explains that in 2017 300 hours of videos are uploaded to YouTube every minute.

The word 'mechanism' may suggest the filtering of content that happens because of a technology made available through the social media platform (such as Facebook's content filters), but that is not the case. One of the mechanisms used for having opaque communication on social media in Balduino is literacy. As chapter five on education and work discusses in detail, locals of all ages have limitations in terms of formal knowledge, starting with reading and writing, but young people in general are better schooled than their respective parents and this makes social media more interesting and desirable for them. Literacy, and computer literacy, makes social media an efficient hiding place where young people can gather and interact openly while knowing that adults are not capable of following such interactions. So, the real skill of the people in Balduino is not using private-facing social media such as WhatsApp to hide communication - it is in creating a sphere of the private within what would otherwise seem to be the entirely public arena of Facebook²⁸.

The following case describes a situation in which a person's Facebook timeline, an online space with high visibility, is used for opaque communication.

Generational tensions are commonly related to the use of new communication technologies (Silva 2010), as chapter four on social media and intimacy will discuss. This tension can be noted, for example, in the case of 16-year-old Margarete, a good-looking local high school student with good grades. Margarete earns money as a babysitter and, different from most kids at her age in Balduino, has only just begun to pay more serious attention to romance. However, this was not good news for her mother, Tilia, a hardworking and yet undereducated person that depends on temporary jobs cleaning other people's houses to earn money. Tilia fell pregnant in her teens and, although she and Margarete's father are still together (which is relatively uncommon for non-evangelical Christian couples), she blames the pregnancy for having limited her opportunities to prosper and progress economically through schooling and work. That explains why Tilia reacted badly as she started hearing gossip that her older daughter had a secret boyfriend. Tilia has high hopes for Margarete and dreads the thought of her making the same mistakes she made: having to quit school to work because of the obligation to take care of and raise children.

²⁸ There are promising comparison to be made between this anonymous public sphere with Lange's (2007) notion of 'privately public' and boyd's (2010a) concept of 'social steganography'.

Tilia is on Facebook, and her first attempt to address this matter was to send a friendship invitation to Margarete with the obvious but unsaid purpose of spying on her daughter's online life. When the daughter rejected her request, Tilia moved to more familiar ground. She spoke to a close friend who is also the mother of Raquel, one of Margarete's closest friends. The two mothers appeared unexpectedly one day when Raquel was online and demanded that she showed Margarete's timeline and photos. Obedient to family hierarchy, Raquel had no alternative but to comply, but she did so knowing the limited understanding these older women have about Facebook. In fact, Raquel was up to date with what was happening with Margarete's new relationship and disapproved. At the same time, she did not agree with the strategy of coercion the mothers were using to spy on her friend's life.

On her daughter's timeline, Tilia mainly saw selfies of Margarete alone published together with several paragraphs of abstract reflections about the nature of relationships, the importance of friendships, faithfulness to God, and other similar stuff. As the texts were long and too complex for Tilia to read, she quickly asked Raquel to show Margarete's photo albums. Again, there was nothing incriminating from the girl's galleries. The mother expected to find proof of the relationship that her daughter had denied existed, but none of her photos showed her holding hands or even alone as a couple with the kid that – rumour has it – was going out with her daughter.

Margarete apparently did not find out about this episode, and yet she was prepared for it as she foresaw her mother's steps of looking at her profile through another person's Facebook account. Margarete is the person who helped set up her mother's Facebook account and the person in charge of turning on the computer and getting it ready for her mother to access Skype or other programs. As Rachel explains, Margarete is 'light-years' ahead of Tilia in terms of this kind of communication. Comparatively, Margarete's social media abilities are like a modern FM/AM radio, while Tilia is like an AM only device; the former can receive the same stations of the latter and operate with a signal that the AM-only equipment does not capture. In other words, Margarete would not post anything that could look suspicious to her mother or her mother's friends. And yet, Margarete also manages to keep her friends informed of what is going on in her life.

Next, I will outline one example of indirection being interpreted and carried to public-facing²⁹ social media. Raquel, Margarete's close friend, was one of my research assistants during fieldwork and she helped me with finding and interpreting what their mothers had missed.

Text in general becomes the means for opaque communication firstly because of the literacy limitations of most adults. Also, Margarete disguises her messages using a generic philosophical wording – such as 'don't ever ignore someone that loves, worries about you and misses you. Because maybe one day you may wake up and find out you have missed the moon while counting the stars' or 'I grew up a lot. I learned, acknowledged [myself]. I met new people but also let go of some people that did not add to my life. - ☹ feeling bothered'. These posts, Raquel explained, indicate that Margarete and her boyfriend are in a turbulent moment, apparently because she thinks or has heard from others that he is flirting with other girls ['counting the stars']. She then hints they might break up or ['let go of some people'].

Tilia looked at these messages but could not see the meaning behind them. While everything about the affair is there for anyone to see, interpreters need to be fully literate and immersed in the same context of relationships as Margarete to be able to associate the things she is abstractly referring to with the actual things she is living. As in the examples of indirection presented earlier and Searle's (1975) observation about context in these kind of communication exchanges, Margarete's use of public-facing social media changes and extracts contextual information from what she posts in a way that shares the responsibility for understanding with others that see the content. To follow this kind of 'publicly private' conversation (Lange 2007), one needs more than being connected on Facebook and understand the social filters applied. In this case, they need to share everyday life experiences and have a similarly higher level of literacy.

Finally, Margarete's case invites us to consider what is new about the Internet and the effects that these new possibilities of communication bring to places like Balduino. As *her story indicates, social media is not necessarily transforming local ways of communicating - the uses of social media can also relate to traditional forms of*

²⁹ 'Public-facing' refers to online spaces such as Facebook timelines in which postings are available to more people. 'Private-facing' social media refers to platforms of interaction that limit the audience to a defined group of participants. Examples of this second type are Facebook chat or WhatsApp.

communication. Also, indirection on social media did not make Margarete different from her mother. At 16 years old, her secret romance progressed and eventually Margarete fell pregnant like her mother and several other local women³⁰. She became responsible for raising a child which meant that she had to quit school and depend on her now partner and her family for financial support.

Though not as attractive and visible as the photos posted on Facebook (see chapter on visual posting), practices like the example above represent a significant part of the written content locals post on public-facing social media.

2.3 Indiretas

2.3.1 Indiretas on and offline

'*Indiretas*', which is like the '*indirectas*' that Puerto Rican women practice (Morris 1981), is a popular expression that refers to a particular form of opaque communication that is also moving from face-to-face exchanges to locals' Facebook timelines. Fisher (1976) also documented similar occurrences in the Caribbean island of Barbados that he calls 'dropping remarks'. Like *indiretas*, as used in Balduino, these comparative examples refer to a way to criticize or verbally attack someone in a cautious and protected manner.

While examining verbal abuse in a Wolof village, Irvine (1993:105) refers to the opportunity that this kind of act opens to the researcher as they represent instances of 'violations and disruptions of normative forms of conduct and social relations' and consequently allow considerations of shared values and forms of bypassing these norms. She then cites Evans-Prichard's (1956: 348) analysis of Zande's *sanza*, an oblique way of speaking that tends to be abusive, and in which 'the great thing [...] is to keep under cover and to open a line of retreat should the sufferer from your malice take offence and make trouble'. The *indireta* in Balduino fits in this description to verbally expose and abuse someone in an oblique manner so that the person being attacked is not mentioned, reducing the risks of revenge.

³⁰ A study conducted in the Northeastern state of Maranhão indicated that almost 30% of pregnant mothers were in their teenage years and that this group have the women with lower socioeconomic background and that 34.5% did not have a partner. See Simões et al. (2003). More about motherhood on chapter four.

Scholars have been mentioning this type of verbal abuse happening on social media in other contexts and countries. Kardozo (2013) describes *indiretas* on Facebook as 'vague or decontextualized or encrypted messages whose author expects only intimate partners understand its meaning precisely'. The ethnography about England (Miller 2016: 36-37), which is also part of the *Why We Post* project, identified the same practice taking place among teenagers as part of banter happening on Twitter. In Turkey, Tufekci (2013) similarly reported people from different sides of an argument talking 'at' each other without mentioning each other.

Traditionally, locals mention the use of *indiretas* taking place to defend themselves from actions carried by people of greater power. For example, the police in Balduino regularly close the main street of the settlement to verify the documents of people riding motorcycles. These 'inspections' are popularly understood as excuses for policemen to collect bribes, and those that have their bikes apprehended will often stand nearby. As the number of people in the same condition grows, some of them begin to talk out loud about the police's cowardice that 'takes the property of working men that have families to raise' while avoiding doing the work they are paid to do, which is 'going after drug lords'. This kind of confrontation leaves a line of retreat as these speech acts are never directed at someone and the person making the criticism aloud is also protected by being part of a group. As the *indireta* complaint is expressed, others nearby in the same situation echo these remarks, approving them or adding to them, as a way of exposing group dissatisfaction and morally shaming the police. But, if a policeman decides to confront a person, that person has a 'line of retreat' and does not enter the confrontation³¹.

Indiretas resonates with Margarete's use of indirection on her Facebook timeline. As she writes about the troubles she is having with her boyfriend, she does not mention his name and writes it in a manner that is not person but neutral. If she only wanted to reach her closest friends then she would use direct chat, but these messages reach a group of people that know both, so indirectly the boyfriend will likely see the posting and know that others also know it is addressed to him.

³¹ A possible contrast to the cases of people avoiding situations that would cause conflict is Gilsenan's (2003) discussion of situations in which people 'agree' not to see each other in public spaces (like the market) since to acknowledge that they are seeing each other means they have a moral obligation to fight. Gilsenan, (2003).

Locals explained that to increase the efficiency of the *indireta*, they wait to publish their messages when the target of the attack is online at the same time as others who have sufficient knowledge of the context to understand it. This ensures that the information arrives at its intended destination, even when both the attacker and the attacked are not 'friends' on Facebook.

A common outcome of using Facebook to indirectly attack someone's reputation is to raise the curiosity about a situation of conflict inside a given social circle. Given the 'strategic ambiguity' used to diffuse responsibility (McKellin 1984; Watson-Gegeo and White 1990: 3-49), it is quite common for part of the audience to wonder whether the message was directed at them and they may check this possibility either contacting the sender privately or discussing the matter with shared relationships that may be informed about the situation that caused the *indireta*. Similarly, people that are not involved in the matter often will privately contact the sender of the *indireta* to learn about the situation and to try to find out the name of the aimed recipient of the attack. The success of this strategy consists in creating a situation to hurt the reputation of the foe in such a way that she or he must take the punishment silently. Responding directly to the attack is often read as a confirmation of responsibility for the act, thereby increasing the circulation of rumours.

Typically, then, the retaliation against an *indireta* comes in the form of another *indireta* and as this 'dialogue' through Facebook posts escalate, it becomes more and more clear who is fighting with whom.

2.3.2 Luciene's *indiretas*

Having finished high school, 24-year-old Luciene reads and writes better than most other adults, and is familiar with using the basic functions of computers. Thanks to these skills and her ambition to prosper financially, she was chosen to take the position of low-ranking management at an industrial laundry service in the area and, because of this job, received a work phone with internet access before this became common in the settlement. This enabled her to upload photos to her Facebook profile at any time of the day. Her economic achievements, her religious beliefs (as a recently converted evangelical Christian) and her relationships are recurrent topics that appear together with the *indiretas* that she posts almost every day.

Often, on Facebook, *indiretas* complain about different forms of betrayal in relationships. For example, before she remarried, many of Luciene's *indiretas* were about romance. She would post on her Facebook timeline phrases such as: 'When you like the person, he cares less, when you move one, he raises hell saying he loves you. What a joke'. Or: 'I tried. I tried everything. But new days will come'. After a breakup, she posted about a female friend who became her ex-partner's new girlfriend: 'There is no such thing as a 'former friend'. There is a person that could not stand [my] personal light and now her mask falls'. There are also *indiretas* referring to everyday events such as an apparent disagreement that could be with a family member, a friend or somebody from work: 'To like me is optional, to respect me is mandatory'. When the minister of a church refused to marry her because she had had a previous marital relationship, she did not invite all the community of that church to the wedding. The day before the ceremony, she posted: 'I don't care about what people feel or think about some of my attitudes. I have my own mind and you don't have to like it.'

Remember that these are not one-to-one conversations as they are not clearly addressed to a certain person and yet the aim is for the message to be seen by a group of people – those who share a level of intimacy to be able to guess who is being attacked. These are posts uploaded onto the public-facing Facebook timelines. Luciene is adding to collective conversations that others in her social circles are already acquainted with. To a visitor unfamiliar with this genre of posting and with her life, her *indiretas* may look like a loose and meaningless fragment of a personal conversation mistakenly made public. This is because *indiretas* also relate to the local condition of physical proximity creating and enhancing possibilities of communication for people who constantly see and interact with each other. In these environments, a message like an *indireta* is not independent or complete but only part of conversations that are carried out simultaneously on and offline. As a form of opaque speech, *indiretas* purposely lack context because the people she intends to reach are those with contextual information to understand these otherwise unclear messages. So, while generally meaningless at first glance to the more cosmopolitan practices of urban educated Brazilians, such as myself, a person living in these more socially dense environments may not specifically understand Luciene's message, but will likely recognize the genre and the intentions of their postings. He or she will say that it is an *indireta*.

2.4 Social 'narrowcasting'

2.4.1 Privately public conversations

As the previous sections argued, a more culturally nuanced understanding of social media in Balduino emerges from thinking about the ways that communication can be hidden in a densely social and morally controlled context. Like other teenagers, Margarete uses social mechanisms related to local practices to engineer channels of private exchange to hide conversations from people constantly observing and controlling one another. This final part of the chapter, then, deals with an opposite possibility, that in which a debate about a matter of collective interest does not take place in open, public situations but instead through private channels. So, while Margarete's case discusses ways of privately communicating in front of others (being 'publicly private') to use Lange's (2007) terminology, this next topic is about forging a public arena using private channels – which corresponds with Lange's alternative term 'privately public'. The idea bares similarities with the concept Legendre, Lenders, May and Karlsson (2008) call 'narrowcasting', in which information may travel through one-to-one or one-to-few 'nodes'.

Adapted to the context of this settlement in Brazil, this solution is a result of the necessity locals have 'to keep undercover and to keep open a line of retreat should the sufferer from malice take offence and try to make trouble' (Evans-Prichard 1956) while still being able to learn about and exchange information about sensitive events. The cases I present relate to oblique communication as the identities of participants are not exposed while the information circulates. Here, public-facing social media is useful because of what it does not show. Some things that happen in Balduino generate intense direct exchanges, but these topics tend to appear less or not appear at all on Facebook timelines. But narrowcasting is not always the same as gossiping, as exchanges also happen more openly as the following examples will indicate.

Lange's (2007) previously cited study of YouTube videos provides a useful framework to compare and analyse this form of communication seen in the settlement. According to this research, while some people use public spaces to upload and share private material, others make videos to reach broader audiences, but do so hiding their own identities (name, surname) and identity information (physical location, phone number, etc.). So, for example, a *youtuber* creates a fictional character and publishes videos where

she or he appears dressed as the character. The aim is for the character to achieve fame but its creator wants to remain anonymous³². The reasons for this choice, Lange explains, include wanting to avoid compromising professional credibility or having concerns about stalkers. With this anonymity, one also has a greater freedom to say and do things that may further the reach of the message³³.

A similar situation takes place in Balduino in relation to talking about certain events. It was only recently that a police unity (as well as other government services) opened in the settlement and for different reasons these services are still not very reliable. Locals depend on their networks of solidarity for protection and for emergency situations, such as having to go to the hospital. Under this same context, some discussions of collective interest often take place through face-to-face encounters, so that people can find out and share opinions about the event without leaving evidence of doing so. Although many of these exchanges happen outside, the information exchanged is not available to all as they would be if the person posted about a certain case on their timelines. An event that people talk about face-to-face or in small groups throughout several days or weeks are only rarely and discreetly mentioned on Facebook.

The most obvious examples of how public debates happen privately or through private interactions tend to be related to violence, implying that people are fearful of speaking up to avoid acts of retaliation. Topics of collective interest include mainly romance infidelities (even more so when it involves evangelical Christians, as they tend to portray themselves as being morally superior – see chapter six) and cases of illness. These interests show other motivations for collective conversations to happen as part of private exchanges. These motivations include a collective monitoring of morality and attacks on individualism as 'levelling mechanisms' (Foster 1965) or, as Fonseca (2000:24) argues³⁴, of gossiping serving to attack the honour and prestige of individuals, working then as an alternative to the often-masculine use of violence to settle disputes.

³² The "Mystery Guitarman" is one of many examples of people who achieved fame by disseminating content on YouTube, but that started this project being careful not to reveal their identities.

³³ In the case of YouTube vloggers, this anonymity allows practices such as showing the interior of one's home on the video or talking about traumatic events that raise the attention of audiences. For more about this type of videos, see: Spyer (2011: 32-34).

³⁴ As she wrote (2000:24): 'To attack, by gossip, the attributes of one and the other is to attack the innermost aspect in the individual, the image that he makes of himself.'

2.4.2 Open secrets

In relation to debates that raise public interest but are only discussed privately, one of the more talked about stories of 2013 in Balduino started on a quiet October morning after a 'sound car' (a car fitted with loud speakers normally used for local advertising) announced that Lyn, a 23-year-old mother of two, had died and her family was inviting the community to her funeral the following day.

As in similar cases, Lyn's death occupied the settlement's attention for many days. However, people only mentioned her on Facebook by posting goodbye photos and religious messages in relation to her passing, while the mention of the actual cause of death did not appear on public-facing social media³⁵. The sound car's broadcast of Lyn's passing generated uneasiness and curiosity, especially due to the lack of information about the cause of her passing. She had not been murdered or involved in an accident, so locals correctly implied that she died of a health issue. The fact the family had kept this information secret during the previous months and now avoided revealing the name of the disease prompted people to wonder, gossip and exchange bits of information based on knowledge coming informally from family members, work colleagues, neighbours and others who knew her.

Having very low level of literacy and no professional training, Lyn worked as a money collector at one of the many informal transportation vans that locals use to move to and from nearby settlements. This made her more visible to the community than the average person as travellers constantly saw her opening and closing the vehicle's door to passengers and then collecting the payment for their trips. Everyday these vans circulate dozens of times through certain defined routes. However, Lyn was also remembered in the settlement as an attractive girl that had been open to casual sexual experiences very early on. In this regard, she was detrimentally labelled '*piriguete*', which refers locally to a (often young) female who is said to exchange sex for ostentatious fun – for example, at swimming pool parties or exclusive bars. Men also describe *piriguetes* as whores that are paid for indirectly through the expenses that it takes before they agree to have sex - a perspective

³⁵ An interesting contrast comes from the ethnography carried out in England, where a patient of cancer uses social media to inform others of his condition and hence receive a level of comfort. See Miller (2016: 220).

that is not dissonant with that present in other academic work as Cerqueira Lana, Corrêa and Rosa (2012).

As locals learned and exchanged information about Lyn's passing, people associated her death with an event that happened a few months earlier. She suddenly fainted while working at the van. The information circulated and Lyn, who had recently become a more active Facebook user thanks to acquiring a camera phone, discreetly refers to this situation in a short post that appears in her timeline in the middle of many selfies, memes and photos of her offspring. Answering to the gossip circulating about the reasons for her fainting, she wrote in a typical *indireta* style:

'People really like to know about other people's lives. When you want to know anything about me, come and ask me directly. Yes, I'm pregnant and no it is not of your husband's and not of your business. Go wash your dishes'.

By acknowledging the surprising event of being pregnant ('who is the father?' was the question she left hanging in the air), she managed to stanch the public curiosity about this event.

The most likely cause of Lyn's death was a HIV-related infection. Sexually transmitted diseases have spread silently in the settlement as a health agent explained to me, citing informally the confidential results of tests carried out locally³⁶. Lyn was probably aware of her contamination, as this same professional explained, because she had given birth 10 months earlier and blood tests (including HIV) are compulsory in public hospitals. Apparently, having been informed of her condition, Lyn went to a specialized hospital in Salvador to collect the government-subsidised drugs for HIV patients, but, seeing others from Balduino queuing to pick up the same medicine, she supposedly gave up the treatment to avoid being shamed and socially ostracized. AIDS was likely the reason she fainted, but even with a debilitating condition, she managed to keep her secret until the end, and it is not clear when her family found out about her illness.

Aside from the mere curiosity about the real cause of her death, locals also discussed through face-to-face gossip networks which people Lyn had recently had sexual relationships with to speculate who might also be contaminated with the disease.

³⁶ According to this source, fifty quick exam kits were offered only to women who voluntarily wanted to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases. The results showed that three out of ten tested positive and that one in ten was contaminated with HIV.

The final section in this chapter examines similar situations of events that interested locals collectively but that they prefer to talk about in face-to-face conversations. All examples are related to acts of violence, and I compare how the conversations about them appear in direct exchanges and in public-facing social media.

2.4.3 Talking about crime on Facebook

One winter morning in Balduino, a medium sized truck parked at the top of a slope without its brakes secured rolled down the main street and ran over two 8-year-old girls. The extent of local discussion after this event reflects how codes of honour associated with low-income groups imposes limits on harming women and children outside of the domestic space (Fonseca 2000: 41). The event visibly transformed how people moved and communicated in the settlement for the following weeks. Instead of people moving through the streets while chatting in pairs or small groups of friends, they moved much slower and constantly stopped to form or join small groups with people they were not necessarily close to, just to exchange information related to the accident. This new configuration lasted for around three weeks following the crash.

A noteworthy aspect of this event is the discrepancy between the interest that this accident raised in face-to-face conversations, and how locals mostly avoided its discussion on public-facing Facebook. On the streets, people showed intense curiosity for its causes and consequences, wanting to know about the health condition of the girls and speculating about the responsibility of the truck owner. On Facebook timelines, however, it was as if nothing of significance had happened in the settlement. It felt as if the people using social media were different from those walking the streets. Locals in general did not mention the story online and those who did framed it only in relation to religion, never explicitly referring to it as a crime.

Here is an example of a rare post about the occurrence. A young evangelical Christian, owner of an air conditioning business near the site of the crash, posted two days after the accident the following message:

'GOD IS VERY GOOD! Look at the damage the truck did in the gate and fence of the site opposite to my shop. Had it come to the other side I would have had a great loss of money. The truck went down the street driverless for about 100 metres, 2 children were hit and [the truck]

caused this damage you see. I am sorry for the children, but I'm glad they lived thanks to God'.

His post included the photo below taken from the front of his business of the place the truck hit the wall.



Fig. 2.3: Photo posted online referring to the accident with the truck.

Later that week, 26-year old Lúcia, the mother of one of the girls, began to use social media to send updates to the settlement. Lúcia has a smartphone and is experienced at using Facebook. After the accident, she received many direct messages, including from people that were not close to her family. Those were, among others, neighbours, peers from work or from church, and teachers and parents of children that are in the same class at school as Lúcia's daughter. These chat messages were generally wishing the girls well and asking about their health. Lúcia saw that by sharing updates online about her daughter she would not need to respond to every person individually.

Being also an evangelical Christian, Lúcia framed the event on social media as God testing her family's faith (comparing it to the Biblical story of Job³⁷) and thanked God that her child was otherwise well. In her first post, she uploaded a photo of the girl showing the bandages around the amputated forearm and added the message:

'Thanks very much everyone for your prayers. I am all right. God is faithful. Believe in that. These were the words my daughter asked me to share with this photo so you will not worry about her'.

Looking at how the event is presented and discussed on and offline, we see that people on Facebook followed the outcomes of the accident with attention. One of the early photos Lúcia uploaded was shared 126 times in the same day, also receiving many likes and short positive comments. However, locals were cautious when it came to discussing the event on social media. They showed interest (as seen by the number of shares, 'likes' and comments), but avoided associating their profiles with the critical opinions they themselves shared during street conversations.

The use of social media in this case makes evident how people in Balduino feel vulnerable, to violence through revenge³⁸. This kind of fear is not something locals in general are afraid of acknowledging in conversations with people they trust. The day the accident happened, for example, a police investigator met with Ana, a 28-year-old who works at a shop near the place the truck had been parked. She told him that she did not see anything that morning. After this agent left, however, Ana confided in me that if she *had* seen something, she would have given the same answer to avoid being involved. Like most people in the settlement, she argued that these investigations are only superficial and that suspects are rarely arrested and tried.

³⁷ In The Book of Job, Satan challenges God to test Job's integrity. Job is a virtuous and prosperous family man that, through God's actions, faces horrendous disasters that take away his health, his property and his offspring.

³⁸ O'Donnell's (1993) colour classification system describe 'brown areas' corresponding to locations in Brazil where the state is unable to enforce its legality so local politics depend on clientelism and personal relationships. Paradoxically, police do not service the needs of the population, for example, carrying out investigation and arrest of locals that intimidate or attack their neighbours. At the same time, the same police use their position of power to attack locals. For example, they illegally deliver 'educational beatings' to teenagers that wear hip-hop style fashion items that the police see as an emulation of organized crime. Locals know from experience that the police force is understaffed and – compared to the attention they show towards affluent families – police agents generally display unwillingness and arrogance towards low-income families and individuals that need help. Locals say that unless the media picks up a case and promotes it to reach larger audiences, investigations into common accidents and fights that result in victims are usually quickly archived.

'I am sad for the girls, but things won't change now. The accident will not be undone whether he is found guilty or not, the police investigation is only a formality. They must do their job, but they don't care for us. Each family is on their own for that, and [the truck driver] can take revenge on me, or on my family. We must be silent. That is how it works here, unfortunately.'

This sensation of vulnerability does not affect 29-year-old Cássio. He is a business owner of affluent background, studied in a private school in Salvador, but came back to Balduíno to manage his family's local restaurant. After a friend of his from the settlement was killed, he posted a message on his Facebook timeline that, compared to the previous case, is very explicit.

'PLEASE, stop asking me questions (especially through the chat) about the death of Antônio; I am not from the police and am not investigating the case. All I know is that my friend was killed! I am 100% sure that he was not doing anything wrong... He probably fucked the woman of a coward cuckold, got into a fight on the street or something else equally banal... The reason (for me) does not matter. I lost my friend and nothing will bring him back... I only wish that the bastard that did it pays for the crime he committed.'

This post also contrasts with another murder case that circulated on social media. Robson, a 23-year-old driver living in the settlement used his motorcycle to follow the daughter of another local businessman one afternoon. Robson heard she was going to the bank to deposit a large sum of money and, as she parked the car at a neighbouring settlement (Balduíno does not have a bank), he stopped by her window and, pointing a gun, forced her to give him the money. But as Robson left, the woman called her father, who immediately took off in his car driving towards the other settlement and identified Robson – his clothing, helmet and motorcycle colour – parked at the side of the road. The father made a quick U-turn and hit Robson and his motorcycle with the car. As Robson laid unconscious on the floor, other people from Balduíno arrived at the scene and one of them made a video using their smartphone.

These three cases are related in the way they circulated on social media. Typically, this kind of content does not appear on public-facing Facebook. The criminal aspect of the accident with the truck had to be neutralized and described as a test from God. Robson is not an evangelical Christian and had been caught committing a crime using a shotgun. The video of him was widely seen in the settlement, but only through direct bluetooth exchange, as locals were careful to not share it outside of their circles of trust. Nothing about

Robson's armed robbery and later death surfaced on Facebook timelines. Locals used the same direct exchanges to contact Cássio and ask whether he knew the reason his friend was killed. Cássio's message makes clear that many people were contacting him on chat and asking if Antonio was involved in drug dealing. Due to his affluent background, Cássio was not afraid to talk about a crime on his Facebook timeline, but he also dismissed the event as being the result of a banal situation and not of a more serious offence.



Fig. 2.4: Screenshot from the video about Robson's case.

Social media exchanges about violence – even those related to accidents – were kept almost entirely on private-facing channels. The only event related to violence that I saw on public-facing Facebook timelines showed the dead body of Raphaella, a 14-year-old teenager who died in a car crash when returning from a short visit to a neighbouring settlement. Raphaella's stepfather and her mother survived. They were travelling at high speed when the stepfather apparently lost control of the car and hit the back of a bus. The impact threw Raphaella's body through the front window. As the police arrived, they secured the place as they waited for the official service to take the body. While they waited, locals passing by on their evening commute home by bus photographed Raphaella's body on the road.

As chapter three and this section indicate, photographing these events are normal in Balduino. When bodies are found there and news circulates, people go out of their way to look and take photos, which they will later share inside trusted circles as part of conversations about the person killed and the reason he or she died, who did it and why. While Raphaella's case may seem an exception as it was shown openly on public-facing

social media, it was only because her stepfather, the person responsible for the accident, did what was common in these situations: he fled to avoid arrest. As Raphaella's passing was not associated with anyone particularly dangerous – a person known as violent or otherwise respected and feared –, and because her family had moved relatively recently to the settlement and did not have ties there, locals did not feel intimidated about exposing the photos of the accident.



Fig. 2.5: One of the image of Raphaella that circulated on local social media.

2.5 Conclusion

A key insight about social relations in Balduino came with the realization of how locals, and especially women, can talk with each other face-to-face in such ways that people around them would not be aware of the conversation or understand the information being exchanged. Another common 'speech act' is known in Balduino as *indireta*, and it consists of a language-based strategy to attack or shame foes (especially those more powerful than the attacker) in a protected manner. This chapter shows that such traditional forms of communication have been adopted for online exchanges and represent part of the reason social media is popular in the settlement.

One way of noticing that locals control the visibility of their conversations is to

compare discussions about crimes and other delicate events happening off and online. They talk about these cases openly and enthusiastically in the streets, as they meet each other while moving in Balduino. During these conversations, they normally exchange critical opinions and share details about the event, but only rarely parts of the same information appear on public-facing Facebook timelines. What is common, then, about the different cases presented in this chapter is that participants recurrently extract parts of certain messages making it decontextualized or ambiguous so that the audience shares the responsibility for understanding what is being said (Brenneis 1986, Watson-Gegeo and White 1990).

The topic of oblique speech relates to chapter one because such acts are associated with postcolonial contexts and with the ‘condition of immigration and of plantation life and labour’ (Brenneis 1987). Locals talk about using these communication strategies in situations of vulnerability: women alienate men and next-door neighbours from learning about certain situations of conflict. Low-income subordinates ridicule bosses or other locals and have conversations that others cannot understand.

The popularity of social media is often explained as part of urban and cosmopolitan lifestyles. According to this narrative, people communicate online because they have increasingly less opportunities to meet face-to-face. What is noticeable about the uses of digital media in places like Balduino is that they also respond to a different necessity. Locals use online platforms to keep contact and co-ordinate actions with people that live far from them, but they also see the value of, through social media, achieving the same consequences of indirect communication. Living surrounded by extended family and networks of support, they are using Facebook and WhatsApp to limit the audience of certain conversations.

But as indirection appears on social media, its uses reflect different aims. Historically in the settlement, the masters of indirect communication were women, now these strategies expose conflict and tensions within different generations. Young people refer to the advantages of having a domain of communication that is less controlled by traditional values and morals. An evangelical Christian explained to me how she could cultivate relationships online with peers from her university that were not evangelicals or even Christians. Thanks to offline and computer literacy, young people are less able to be controlled by their older relatives. And yet the outcomes of this possibility are not obvious.

The more intense and sophisticated use of social media does not necessarily translate to breaking the pattern of teenage pregnancy among low-income Brazilians. It was Margarete's barely literate mother that advocated she should prioritize her career and delay childbirth.

Another contrast between online and offline is that online indirection seems to predominately be a channel for individualistic attacks: one person complaining through *indiretas* about what others did to or said about them. The mobile phone is an exclusive item that expands the possibilities of individual communication. In the past, locals speak about collective activities that took place outside of the sight of others: for example, children from a certain area playing together, women shell fishing and men fixing their fishing nets. One of the affordances that mobile internet offers is for people to interact individually. It has become easy for any two people to interact independently of their location because these conversations now take place through text messages, silently exchanged using smartphones that are used exclusively by the owner.

Finally, the various cases in this the chapter indicate how the notions of private and public do not represent how locals experience and use places like homes and streets. Homes and streets are often shared spaces, constantly monitored by others such as relatives or neighbours. Hence in the following chapter I propose alternative notions to private and public that emerge from considering the social use of living spaces and also the local practice of indirection. Using these tools helps understanding the emic perception of what constitutes an online 'friend', why locals chose not to use online content filters, and the particular meaning locals attribute to private and public-facing social media.

3

Indirection, social media and visual postings

As Edwards (2015: 244) reminds us, ‘photographs were exchange objects’ ever since the early days of anthropology. Being the equivalent of a professional photographer³⁹ at various weddings and children’s birthday parties in Balduino provided valuable opportunities for me to participate in these social events. My presence accompanying a group of students on a school trip spontaneously evolved into a long photo-shooting session as, during a break, children and teenagers queued with their peers to have a go at posing for portraits. For locals, photographing also was one of the reasons to purchase smartphones – even before social media. From children to older adults, they use phones to

³⁹ I say ‘equivalent of a professional photographer’ because I had a better-than-average camera that produces high-quality images and I did not charge for my work. Friends understood I would be happy to be part of their events and that I did not mind acting as a photographer and giving them the files afterwards.

carry and exchange files: music, video clips and different kinds of still images including memes and photographs. Small businesses in the settlement charge customers to transfer these large databases to new phones, or to edit images and print them for different occasions. People commonly use their phones to show photos as part of conversations to illustrate the subjects being discussed.

It is not, however, the intention of this chapter to contribute to the vast body of work produced in the last few decades about visual anthropology, anthropology and photography and anthropology and film. Firstly, because this is not a conventional piece that addresses issues of memory, representation, affect, presence and history, often dialoguing with seminal work such as Barthes (1981), Sontag (1977) and Benjamin (2008). The content examined ahead includes not just photographs but different types of digitally produced images. Also, while anthropologists have made relevant contributions to the debate about digital photography (e.g. Gómez Cruz and Lehmuskallio 2016), the focus here is not on the consequences of visual content on social media. The analysis will prioritize the comparison of the genres that emerge from the postings and the interpretations that locals provide about this material.

3.1.1 Content, context, method and ethics

The content I present here include: 1) screenshots that I took from video clips that locals sent to me via WhatsApp; 2) photographs that informants took and uploaded on their public-facing Facebook timelines and albums; and 3) memes⁴⁰ that reached people from the settlement while circulating on Facebook and WhatsApp. Except for one photo that I use to exemplify a type of image that is a common part of the landscape but absent from social media, these files were either created or appropriated online by locals. Then I curated them using a process described ahead to arrive at fifty examples that are not in general those considered the most striking images or the ones that attracted my personal interest, but a selection of those most representative of the visual material the people in Balduino use and exchange as part of their social relations with and through social media.

Images and videos are particularly useful as a form of communication to a population that has low literacy rates, but this must not be the only reason for the intense

⁴⁰ I am calling 'meme' here an image, video or piece of text, often moralizing or humorous in nature, that Internet users share on social media.

use of online visual material in Balduino. In fact, the two essential claims regarding visual images in the comparative volume of the *Why We Post* project are that ‘the vast majority of photography today is social media photography [and] that our relationship to visual images has reached a level of ubiquity that is historically unprecedented’ (Miller et al. 2016: 156). Locals have traditionally depended on oral communication to create and maintain relationships⁴¹, but exchanging visual files is now becoming an important part of how social relations are carried. Personal photos take the place of textual descriptions in exchanges about residents’ everyday lives and experiences. Sharing videos and memes simplifies the act of expressing opinion or commenting on events. Being unable to read or write are no longer limitations for a person to participate in ‘small talk’ with peers online. By sharing an image or video they can joke and show moral values in relation to themes such as politics and religion. But, in addition to that, the ability of being online is an act that carries prestige – especially to the less literate – and this is also a motivation to use visual content on social media. Since the computer is commonly associated with modernity and progress, the person who manages to use it acquires these same attributes and is consequently perceived as having better education.

The ambition of this chapter is to display the images that appear more regularly on locals’ social media. Most of these files come from public-facing Facebook postings of the same 30 informants and – for sample control – the collection of this material took place at a defined period during fieldwork in the second half of 2013⁴². The users I chose to be part of this case study represent roughly the demographics of the settlement in terms of age, education, religious preferences and socioeconomic strata. The most recent twenty posts that included a visual element on their Facebook timelines were then classified by keywords to identify recurring themes. This classification could refer, for example, to the type of files (photo, video), to a technical aspect (use of filter, adding visual element), or to the type of content (humour, religion, politics), among many other possibilities. I then applied an adapted version of the same method to collect and classify content that circulates through WhatsApp. The different themes present in each section emerged from

⁴¹ A rich review of the topics ‘oral culture’ in relation to popular culture can be found at Fonseca (2000: 60-62)

⁴² This work happened synchronously with the *Why We Post* team to enable multi sided comparison of the visual content collected from the nine field sites.

identifying the most recurrent visual content circulating both in the open and privately. The initial process of recording the sample of images hopefully enabled me to see beyond my preconceived ideas to include content that did not initially catch my attention.

3.1.2 Lights on, lights off

It was the exercise of contrasting the images exchanged on Facebook timelines and in direct chats that provided the initial insight to analyse social media in Balduino through the notions of 'lights on' and 'lights off' as alternatives to using the often imprecise organizing categories of 'private' and 'public' (Weintraub and Kumar 1997:xi-xii). As the last section of chapter two shows, certain events that mobilize locals collectively tend not to appear on public-facing social media areas such as Facebook timelines. In the offline domain, these events are discussed in the streets, however not through speeches meant to address larger groups of people but in small gatherings where participants tend to know the others present and participate both in speaking and listening. As Sheller and Urry (2003) argue in relation to the use of mobile phones, there are multiple privates and publics. In Balduino, local streets are often not anonymous public spaces in opposition to the private home, but those in which people share relationships and history. They are the turf [*pedaço*] (Magnani 2013) associated with extended family relations and broader networks of sociality.

Indirection, as presented earlier, privatizes or hides conversations so that they can take place in spaces that are socially controlled including streets and local households inhabited by extended family members. Locals are constantly being scrutinized in relation to who they speak with and what they say, hence the importance of creating strategies to use indirection. Meneley's (2016) ethnography of Yemen provides a rich comparison model to the case in Balduino by describing how the home is the public space for women in the sense that they are constantly observed and controlled. This framing also echoes the findings of Costa's ethnography (2016: 4), who is also part of the *Why We Post* project, about the use of public-facing social media in Turkey. She posits that Facebook timelines there are constantly being observed by relatives, thus becoming 'a new form of public space that in many ways is more conservative and traditional than offline worlds [...]'. Similarly, as the following pages will argue, the content that locals in Balduino add to their public-facing social media is not related to politics, news or other such topics. They instead show the inside of homes and of lives, but aim to reach broader audiences of neighbours outside

of a person's household. In other words, postings on Facebook often expose personal spaces and events which are accessible only to a close, trusted network. Through Facebook, the people that would not enter the home of a certain family because they are not close enough to do so, have access to that home through photos of personal situations. However, the content that they view is curated. Metaphorically speaking, Facebook timelines particularly work in Balduino like the suits or dresses that people use to go to special events. They are personal at the same time in that they mediate relationships with the community in the settlement and are meant to display certain values.

The proposed notions of lights on and lights off are related, for example, with the way that traditional religious practices in the settlement have different visibilities. The census publication carrying statistical data of Brazilian counties (Ferreira, Filho and Faissol 1958) refers, about Camaçari county in the 1950s, to the predominant presence of Catholicism, mentions one protestant church, but includes nothing on Afro-Brazilian religions' places of worship. Still today, Balduino's catholic chapel is surrounded by a small plaza that underlines its presence and makes it separate from the rest of the settlement, and its building is at the highest and most visible spot in the locality. Comparatively, there are at least nine working Afro-Brazilian candomblé yards in the settlement, which host regular ceremonies and ritual 'parties'. However, neither are located at the centre of the settlement nor generally have signs that make them distinguishable from other rural plots in the surroundings. They are visible, as discussed about indirection, with the least contextual information possible so that to perceive them the person must either live near them or be familiarized with the particularities of this religion to distinguish certain objects, especial constructions and plants.

As analytical categories, lights on and lights off resemble Goffman's (1959) notions of 'frontstage' and 'backstage'. But, as Turkle (2006) argues, social lives have always depended on roles and frames independent of the domain of social interaction. We follow roles at family dinner as much as in sessions of 'speed dating' in which one has short conversations with strangers. I am not implying that lights off is less socially constructed than lights on or that locals are more spontaneous when in lights off condition. The differences refer to conventions and types of relationships that exist in Balduino. Complementarily, my categories also derive from Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *habitus*, describing or reflecting that which locals of peasant backgrounds in the settlement learn

through social practice about what they should avoid doing openly – such as worshipping Camdomblé deities. In this context, ‘lights on-style’ (everyone sees) of posting on social media tend to reflect submission to norms while ‘lights off-style’ (only some see), similarly to oblique speech discussed in chapter two, provides grounds for insubordination to these norms and the cultivation and negotiation of individual and group relationships outside of specific family bonds. Furthermore, locals also occupy the space of penumbra on social media to partially expose tensions such as through the practice of the *indireta*.



Fig. 3.1: Lights on shows the beautified self while lights off includes content related to sex, humour, violence and gossip about others.

Polymedia (Madianou and Miller 2013) is a helpful conceptual tool for this analysis as it proposes that the understanding of specific platforms – be it Facebook, YouTube, Instagram or WhatsApp – should be considered not in themselves but in relation to all the other media that are being used. The notion of polymedia offers a way to interpret the disparity of types of content as it posits that, because now there are abundant possibilities and alternatives of digital platforms available for people to communicate, the choice of which channels to use follows a moral understanding of these platforms. Applying the concept began by considering which types of content locals want to show to everybody and

which are the ones that circulate inside trusted networks, and the moral understandings associated with one and the other. The notions of lights on and lights off emerged by contrasting the positive display of one's own life to a general audience on one side, with constant attacks and surveillance towards others that happens inside trusted channels that include direct or group exchanges. With lights on, they openly display prosperity, enjoyment and beauty, while in less exposed channels they talk about other people's sex lives or crimes, and share porn, violence and politically incorrect humour, among other types of files.

Following the conclusions of the previous chapter, however, while we might say that public-facing Facebook represents lights on and that private-facing WhatsApp represents light off, this chapter also shows a secondary level of complexity in how people apply social media in their daily lives. As previous cases and images presented ahead show (and contrary to what may seem obvious), public-facing social media can be used as lights off and private-facing 'narrowcasting' is the locality's true and effective field of collective debate. In chapter two, Margarete published on her Facebook timeline messages that only her friends could interpret. This exemplifies the situation of lights off exchanges happening in front of the settlement's eyes.

This chapter intends to readdress the argument from a different angle that Facebook and WhatsApp are successful in Balduino because, among other reasons, they allow people to communicate and relate to each other through various new possibilities, including pre-existing norms and values. There were always 'private' and 'public' worlds that were fundamental both to the socialisation of young people and to the morality of adults. However, these do not correspond simply to conventional meanings of private and public, but to a more complex world which includes the ability to create invisibility within what might otherwise have seemed the visible, to cultivated a way of 'hiding in the light', of using the public and the visible to create spheres of invisibility within.

3.2 Lights off

This is where sensitive social media interactions take place. It is there that we learn what people are interested in independently of the subject being dangerous or being morally or legally problematic. And considering only the time invested in this type of online 'face-to-face' direct contact, WhatsApp and Facebook chat are clearly more desirable and useful

domains of social relations than public-facing social media. Young users may post on their Facebook timelines two or three times a day and use it to follow what their contacts are doing, but comparatively they will remain connected for more hours checking out other people's posts and exchanging direct individual or group messages.

Lights-off conversations include a lot of text as it allows for more secretive and 'quiet' exchanges. If a person is typing, she or he can discuss any subject even if they are physically near other people and this new possibility makes communication an expression of indirection. Chapter five will show how these and other conditions related to the use of social media help make reading and writing desired practices. But, together with long and almost endless chains of dialogue, locals also use social media to directly exchange files containing audio, images, and short video clips. The activity then evokes topics of conversation, which produces even more circulation of files.

One way of identifying visual files shared as lights off is based on its source: the material originally made in Balduino is usually more sensitive as they relate to people and families known locally, so the circulation of this type of content is more controlled. One of the few cases related to violence that I saw circulating on public-facing Facebook timelines was about 14-year-old Raphaella who died in a car accident, which I discuss at the end of the last chapter. Locals uploaded photos of her body on public-facing Facebook as the person responsible for the crime had fled the area and Raphaella's family had moved to the settlement recently. As chapter six discusses further, it is rare for local acts of crime to be shared openly among locals. In general, locally-sensitive content generates more interest but the circulation will happen mostly through direct one-to-one exchanges sent only to more-trusted relatives and peers. They also present the very problematic material with extra caution: these files are either played on the person's own mobile (to avoid sharing the file) or forwarded using Bluetooth⁴³ (as in the Robson's case, also in chapter two) so that the people sharing the content cannot be detected. On the other hand, more visually disturbing content is less carefully handled simply because it does not involve people from

⁴³ Before pay-as-you-go internet services became popular in the settlement, locals of different ages were highly knowledgeable about sharing files using Bluetooth, a standard for the short-range wireless interconnection of electronic devices. The experience of using Bluetooth eased the transition to the adoption of WhatsApp, as WhatsApp represented, among other things, the possibility to do the same type of file sharing independently of the two people being near each other, as was the case with Bluetooth exchanges.

the settlement. These less sensitive exchanges demand less caution so they happen through broadcasted WhatsApp messages or inside WhatsApp groups.

In short, the main element that defines how a file is shared – more or less carefully – is not the type of the content itself, but its relation to people from the settlement. So, for example, a horrid video clip recorded in the streets of a teenager being bullied, undressed and beaten is mostly seen and forwarded more broadly like a porn file or a politically incorrect humorous image meme, because the event happened elsewhere and the people shown are unknown to them. What is attractive is the spectacle of nudity, humiliation and violence. However, a less disturbing piece of content that is about someone from Balduino – such as the photo of a place where an accident happened – will receive special attention and will circulate inside more selected social ties.

3.2.1 What I will not show

The more common topics shared through lights off conversations are sex, violence, bizarre things, certain types of humour, religion, children, dance, and what I have labelled ‘representations of the popular domain’. Politics is also important, but only in the context of campaigns during months before elections. However, not all the content that I collected should appear here, including for legal reasons. Many clips have explicit sexual content or scenes of violence, including with minors, that are deeply disturbing. Since this is only one aspect I am discussing about social media use, I will give a written overview of this kind of content.

Sex and pornography represented perhaps the more popular subject of files in circulation in the settlement and this theme relates with the general interest locals have for cases of extramarital affairs. Sex clips and images are not exclusively or even predominantly shared by men. Many of the sex videos I received arrived from female informants and the reason for sharing was not usually for the personal enjoyment of watching the scenes but for learning tricks that could be tried with the partner – such as how to perform a certain sexual position or how to do erotic massages. One of the amateur files shows informatively the process in which a clitoris is cosmetically pierced. There are also pornographic recordings that do not intend to produce sexual excitement; instead, they work as idioms representing certain ideas or views and occasionally stimulating conversations on certain topics. Among the most common types of video female adults

shared during some months were about painful anal penetration or about transsexuals with attractive feminine features and (surprisingly in the narrative of the videos) large penises. These two recurrent types of content hinged on the topic of machismo and relate both to traditional matrifocal family formation and the tensions that formal alternatives of work have in family life – as discussed in chapter four about intimacy.

The content of lights off channels also includes material that has strong similarities with freak shows in travelling circuses from the past and present. One such travelling troupe that came to Balduino had clearly three types of attractions: humour (primarily sex and cursing), danger (risk of dying) and sex (exotic dancers). Both the exotic dancers and most of the audience were younger (often much younger) than 18 years old, so technically minors. The circus then seemed in line with the types of ‘attractions’ that are popular in lights off exchanges and that also resonate with the notions of carnival and grotesque realism discussed by Bakhtin (1984), whose analysis of popular culture in the Middle Ages is also referenced in other ethnographies of low-income groups in Brazil – i.e. Goldstein (2013: 11-12) and Fonseca (2000: 80).

Bizarre things and humour are perhaps the two elements that, when combined, interconnect all the different types of files circulating among emergent WhatsApp users. The purely bizarre include videos of self-mutilation, sadomasochism, sex with animals, and (very graphic) medical recordings of surgeries (i.e. haemorrhoids, penis enlargement). The content viewed as humorous and bizarre depict people defecating on the street, a female dwarf stripping and dancing naked, a deformed man with a large penis ‘playing with himself’ beside a river, and people with various forms of physical anomalies.

I have created an archive with the files that informants sent me during and after fieldwork, including these with bizarre content, to hopefully return to in the future.

3.2.2 What I will show

Though part of the material circulating through lights off channels can be disturbing and even legally problematic, there are also large quantities of material that are not. Ranging from very disturbing to only politically incorrect, this content exposes the subjects that are currently attracting the attention of this population. The relevance of a certain file or a certain type of file is evident through how broadly shared it becomes. For instance, the tension that WhatsApp is bringing to local families has been captured on

various videos made elsewhere in the country but that were intensely shared in Balduino during the months WhatsApp was becoming popular. Many videos I received were of teenagers recording an adult parent or relative complaining about how social media has stolen the attention of young people from them⁴⁴. Through clips and images shared on social media, Brazilians of a lower socioeconomic background are participating in conversations connecting people living everywhere in the country. These group conversations happen through the exchange of files which is also a special type of ethnographic evidence; one made and circulated by this population.⁴⁵



Fig. 3.2: Screenshot of an amateur video clip that low-income circulate that a person with low-income circulated.

Somewhat similar (or thematically near to) the videos labelled as bizarre are those I grouped as ‘representations of the popular domain’. These files display people that embody the visions about backwardness particularly to teens and young people. This category in a way is the complementary opposition of the selfies posted on public-facing social media showing one’s beauty and aspiration – as the following section examines. They are

⁴⁴ The *Why We Post* channel on YouTube includes some of these clips that can be watched here: *Why We Post*, 2016. Northeast Brazil: The plague of WhatsApp for Brazilian parents. *Why We Post*, 2016. and here: *Why We Post*, 2016. Northeast Brazil: Technology and generational differences - INSTAGRAM.

⁴⁵ Munn’s (1992) study of value creation in relation to the circulation of ceremonial goods taking place, such as in the Kula Ring, offers a useful theoretical framework to discuss the circles of exchange of videos online. And see also Chapter 3: Value Production and Spatiotemporal Expansion through Tag videos’ in Spyer (2011).

predominantly amateur videos made using smartphones and showing mostly older people displaying signs of physical degradation, especially a lack of frontal teeth, and often drunkenness.

These subjects know they are being recorded and tend to participate in the video willingly, perhaps ignoring how the recording is made to allow others to ridicule them. However, what is laughable is not only the display of what is perceived as ugly and decadent, but also a spontaneity, an openness about sexuality (i.e. older people talking, singing about or performing sex), a sense of humour (even in relation to his or her own bodies) and a sense of enjoyment of life. Hence, the popularity of these videos may also indicate how the people watching may be laughing at them but also *with* them; negating but also identifying with these expressions of ‘backwardness’.



Fig. 3.3: Screenshot of an amateur video clip that low-income circulate that a person with low-income circulated.

‘Dancing’ and ‘children’ could be subcategories of the representations of the popular domain, but I separated from the whole due to the high quantity of videos about this topic that circulated among locals in Balduino during the period that WhatsApp became popular there.

In these videos, dancing is often a way of exposing one’s sensuality and sexuality; the dances recorded are often representations of sex acts. Even the dancers that are alone perform sex movements. Again, this specific material produces an ambiguous perception. On the one hand, there is the quality and exuberance of all dances; children and adults both exhibit physical coordination, energy, intensity, and creativity. It is not uncommon also that the recording of these videos happens at home with parents and relatives laughing

appreciatively of the display of excellence and of the child emulating the world of grownups.



Fig. 3.4: Screenshot of an amateur video clip that low-income circulate that a person with low-income circulated.

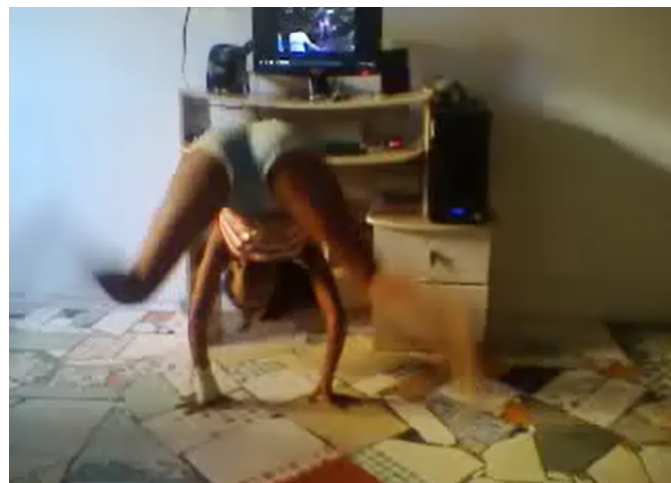


Fig. 3.5: Screenshot of an amateur video clip that low-income circulate that a person with low-income circulated.

It is important to keep in mind how the images analysed so far are contrasted to the following material, which circulates openly on Facebook. While the primary focus of attention there is beauty and the accomplishment or future aspirations of the self, WhatsApp exchanges and Facebook chat conversations more often display ‘ugliness’ both in what they consider the physical and the moral sense, and the present-day reality of the nearby or culturally similar others. Lights on carries the benign and tame aspects of one’s own prosperity while through lights off we see the types of experiences more commonly related to poverty in Latin America. Lights off is not only sad and fearful (it can and often is related to enjoyment and humour), but is constantly somewhat dark in its essence.



Fig. 3.6: Screenshot of an amateur video clip that low-income circulate that a person with low-income circulated.

3.3 Lights on

This batch of images bears some resemblance with how photography existed in the settlement before digital cameras and social media. The oldest types of photographic content that I saw inside dwellings were portraits of parents, grandparents and other family members in ways that have been analysed as visual records of roles and relationships (Bourdieu and Bourdieu 2004). These existing early images relate to lights on in the sense of how they appear to represent the highest moral conventions regarding respect for family and family hierarchies (Bahia 2005). However, they are rare given the absence until recently of businesses related to photography in the settlement, the general economic limitations of most families and the fact that these images often record special occasions (Agier 2007; Azevedo 1966; Woortmann 1987; Bourdieu and Whiteside 1996) such as formal marriages, which are still not common practices among many locals.

As demands for formal employment increased in the area, passport-sized photos became part of the process required by government to provide ID cards and employment registration document among others. More recently, as the circulation of money increased within local low-income families and improved transportation facilitates visits to Salvador, some locals acquired pre-digital inexpensive point-and-shoot cameras. Their photos recorded mostly special occasions such as family trips or celebrations and the family's offspring as they grew up. Most of this material is kept in picture books or boxes stored in closets or drawers and looked after by adults. Especially in evangelical Christian families' homes, some of these photos are now being framed. They show family bonds and aspiration, which is expressed through clothing, background (referring to travelling), through forms of posing seen in magazines (the groom holding the bride in the air with the ocean in the background), and, more recently, selfie-like shots displaying affection among close relatives and friends. Today, many of these framed photos that decorate people's homes are originally made using phone cameras and printed locally. Sharing these images using social media or Bluetooth among friends, relatives, neighbours and even strangers is such an important aspect of their lives today that this relatively small settlement has a prosperous local business that provides printing and framing services.

These recordings of the modern self happen often through continuously sharing large quantities of images taken in private settings, meant to reach not those closely related but often people outside of one's direct social circles using artifices to control this exposition⁴⁶.

3.3.1 Self-portraits, beauty, and consumption

It is not the (large) quantity of images that make timelines of people in Balduino different in relation to those Brazilians of different socioeconomic backgrounds. What is interesting is the time invested in making these photos and the elements that are either brought forth or erased in the pictures. Particularly teenagers make great efforts to show neatness, for example, by constantly using spell checkers before posting content publicly and by avoiding capturing scenes associated with poverty – more in chapter five about education and work. Misspelling words indicates that the person's family is 'backward' for not understanding

⁴⁶ About controlling the exposition of content posted online, see for example: Lange (2007) and Müller (2004).

the value of education or not having the means to send their offspring to school. Young people can be ashamed of having adult relatives that do not value schooling. On social media, this translates also into paying attention to one's notifications as services such as Facebook inform the user of occurrences related to his or her online presence including cases of comments or 'liking' of the user's posts. Following these notifications, they can quickly erase misspelled or misplaced comments left by older relatives. Similarly, the view of unfinished brick walls, arguably the settlement's most recurrent visual background, is meticulously erased from photos – simply by consciously choosing not to take a photo showing this type of background – as this image suggests that the family is struggling and are not able to have a 'proper' house with finished plaster walls. So, photos are purposely taken with neutral backgrounds such as inside painted walls.



Fig. 3.7: Here is an example of the type of exposed brick wall that is among the most common visual elements in the settlement, but that is avoided in photos for representing poverty and backwardness.

Hair is often straightened and shows a fringe

In the following cases, displaying beauty means focusing on the hair. Hair is a tense issue for women in Balduino as most people there have African ancestry and, given the settlement was near the colonial epicentre of slave trade, straightening the hair is generally perceived as corresponding to cleanness and progress⁴⁷. This is not just a matter of taste as

⁴⁷ Discussions of hair in its relation to race in Bahia can be found in Baran (2007) and Caldwell (2003).

informants reported that the better paying administrative jobs are not available to women that have 'Afro' hairstyles (more in chapter five about education and work).

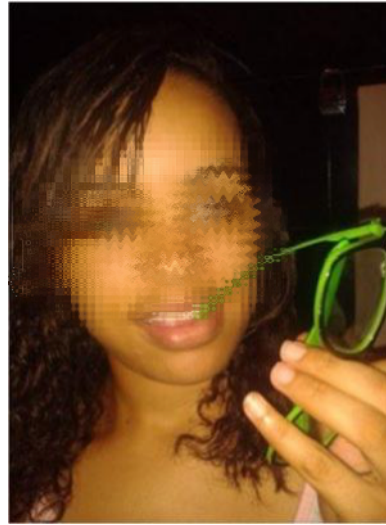


Fig. 3.8: Selfie showing straightened hair.



Fig. 3.9: Selfie showing straightened hair.

Selfies often display clothing and accessories

Another key element to note is the use of this genre of photos to display one's prosperity through conspicuous consumption (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco 2012). In the cases of selfies made by women, the clothing must be new, and the person should wear make-up, accessories, and other items. These are highly posed photos. Many young people take these photos in front of the mirror to can display their smartphones together with them.



Fig. 3.10: Selfie displaying smartphone.



Fig. 3.11: Selfie displaying tablet computer.

Many of these selfies are also taken at gyms; both because the gym represents the type of consumption related to upward social mobility⁴⁸ and because gyms have large mirrors that allow photos of the whole body to display items such as tennis shoes, watches and smart phones.

⁴⁸ The visions of aspiration appear differently in the field sites of the *Why We Post* Project. In Latin America, Trinidad and North Chile represent opposing examples of how, respectively, consumption is made visible to differentiate individuals or how values of collectivity predominate. In rural and industrial China, migrant industrial workers reflect their purpose of obtaining wealth by staging fantasies of consumption, while in rural China economic aspirations are shaped through tradition. See Haynes (2016), McDonald (2016), Wang (2016) and Sinanan (Forthcoming).



Fig. 3.12: Selfie at the gym.



Fig. 3.13: Selfie at the gym.

The expectation of receiving complimentary comments and likes

Attracting attention through likes and comments is an important part of being online. These portraits are shared under the expectation of mobilizing attention, which is materialized through short comments saying how pretty the person looks.

These same types of selfies, which previously were destined for the respective person's Facebook timeline, are now also shared regularly in WhatsApp groups.



Fig. 3.14: Selfie posted on social media together with the complimentary comments left by friends.



Fig. 3.15: Selfie posted on social media together with the complimentary comments left by friends.

Adults also use photography to show prosperity, which is related to showing certain types of clothing, but their portraits display their inexperience with photographing and being photographed (though this tends to improve with time and experience using social media). Instead of traditional self-made selfies⁴⁹, the photo is more often taken by another person while they pose formally like one would see in old family photos or photos taken for ID cards. The results look, from my perspective, as being less aesthetically accomplished than those of the younger people in the settlement, but the preoccupation with finding neutral backgrounds is recurrent.



Fig. 3.16: Selfie of adult.

⁴⁹ I follow Haynes (2016:200) less conventional definition of selfies, which also considers a selfie a photograph of the person even when taken by another person.



Fig. 3.17: Selfie of adult.

The opposite of cool

The social pressures to show neatness also appear clearly when this aspiration to beauty and perfection is denied. Patrícia, a 13-year-old that lives with her parents and three sisters ages 11 to 17 is an adventurous, outgoing teen that loves to go out with friends and dreams of becoming a professional dancer with bands of Pagodão⁵⁰ and other local music genres. On one occasion, Patrícia took a photo of her older sister Sara sleeping on the couch and posted it on Facebook. The photo was as uncool as a teenager in Balduíno could conceive: hair, makeup, type of clothing, and angle for posing – everything was missing or wrong. Sara woke up later to find her Facebook profile filled with messages from friends, relatives, and even people she did not know ridiculing of her. A few days later, Sara saw a chance to get her revenge and took a similar photo of Patrícia, but instead of immediately publishing it, she decided to first torment her sister by showing her the photo. The vision of appearing publicly in such a humiliating situation provoked a loud dispute between the sisters and their mother intervened, ordering Sara to erase the file.

3.3.2 Displaying enjoyment

If we follow also what adults post we can see how this desire to look attractive and prosperous blend together. A topic that shows this well is the sharing of images that display enjoyment. Such photos suggest that one has the money to consume beyond what is necessary for survival. However, sharing photos that display celebration also relates to a tension in the locality about the meaning of wealth. These images add to ongoing local

⁵⁰ Pagodão and Pagofunk are genres native of Bahia that fuse gangsta-rap ostentation style with musical influences ranging from samba and Brazilian funk to Caribbean Reggaeton.

power disputes about what is more important in life: money gained through work or the autonomy of resisting formal employment.

This tension is more explicit between migrants/Evangelical Christians and natives/non-Evangelical Christians, but also relates to opposing perspectives between young people who prefer formal employment and adults that resist formal work relations as something that enslaves the person. The perception is that prosperity can only be achieved in exchange for a discipline to work that has great impact on family life and personal freedom. More recent migrants arrive to fulfil the work demands of touristic resorts that are opened around the year. Working there provides advantages such as having a steady wage and becoming eligible to receive government unemployment benefits. However, it also imposes high costs on the effort of raising families. Children and other relatives are left behind during working hours and days. Hotel demand peaks during school vacation in the summer and is also higher on weekends and holidays. People, especially women, must get used to being away from their homes and support the complaints and pressure that partners and older relatives often make for the women to stick to their role as carers of the home and of the offspring⁵¹. Displaying enjoyment is a recurrent way that locals use to address this issue on social media.

Swimming pools, sandy beaches and alcohol

In terms of showing enjoyment through prosperity, one of the most desired locations for taking photos is the swimming pool. There are no public or private pools in Balduíno, but they are abundant in affluent properties across the road, so spending time at one displays one's social connections as much as it expresses affluent lifestyle. Visiting pools often results from friendships with housekeepers or in some cases with bosses or former bosses that are the owners of these country houses, but although it is implicit that the person in the photo does not own the pool, the photos challenge the stereotypical image of the submissive and unpretentious poor worker.

⁵¹ Mothers as well as partners are often the most critical about women's embrace of formal employment as this short video shows: *Why We Post*, 2016. Northeast Brazil: Context - An act of rebellion.



Fig. 3.18: Local displaying enjoyment at pool.



Fig. 3.19: Local displaying enjoyment at pool.

Drinking alcohol shows not just a desire to enjoy life, but also marks the person as not being an evangelical Christian and having any negative connotations associated with this condition.



Fig. 3.20: Local displaying enjoyment drinking with friends.



Fig. 3.21: Local displaying enjoyment drinking.

The beach is associated with tourism and the activities of tourists, so photos at the beach also indicate an aspiration for upward social mobility.



Fig. 3.22: Local displaying enjoyment at a touristic site.



Fig. 3.23: Local displaying enjoyment at a touristic site.

Eating

Food indicates both enjoyment of life and prosperity. Meat is particularly symbolic of wealth as non-jerked beef [locally known as ‘carne verde’ meaning ‘unripe meat’] was rarely

consumed in that region in the past due to its high cost. Barbecuing, a practice associated with the more economically developed Southern regions, is often accompanied by loud music as both audio and smell ‘broadcasts’ the event throughout the neighbourhood. Barbecues represent one of the practices common to evangelical Christians and non-evangelicals and both sides commonly post about them on social media. Notice how the poses in the picture below freeze the moment everyone is reaching for the food.



Fig. 3.24: Locals at a barbecue consuming beef, an expensive type of food that displays financial achievement.

Evangelical Christians and young people in general also display the consumption of fast food products, which tie them to the modern urban world as a person who can afford being in these places or ordering these products as a pay customer.

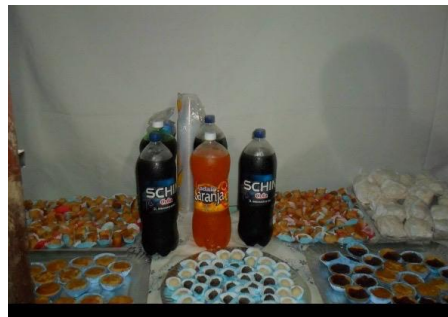


Fig. 3.25: The table of sweets at child’s birthday party.



Fig. 3.26: Locals at a shopping mall consuming fast food.

3.3.3 Displaying bonds

The topic of enjoyment is also related to the enjoyment of being with people. Since Brazilians are generally perceived and perceive themselves as having intense sociability⁵², it is not surprising that social occasions also emerge as a major theme that people post about on Facebook.



Fig. 3.27: Locals showing family bonds.

Peer relations

Traditional peer ties are originally not referred to as ‘friends’ but as ‘*colegas*’. These local types of peer-bonds are about risk-taking, adventure, and fun. The images below suggest this kind of relationship being portrayed, referencing a ‘ghetto’ ethos related with more evident sexuality, hip-hop aesthetic and gangster lifestyle.

Branded clothing is key, as it represents not just that the person is dressing up, but that he or she can spend beyond survival to dress up. Locals explain that the point of wearing these fashionable items is to display one’s association with criminality by wearing brands that can only be purchased by somebody who is not making money as a typically manual low-wage worker.

⁵² See pieces in popular media outlets such as: Forbes, 2013. The Future Of Social Media? Forget About The U.S., Look To Brazil. Also Wall Street Journal, 2013. Brazil: The Social Media Capital of the Universe.



Fig. 3.28: Locals showing peer relations.



Fig. 3.29: Locals showing peer relations.

Together with the hip-hop ostentation style, Christianity is also displayed through fashion and practices. Through evangelical Christianity, the idea of ‘friendship’ is being shown as a new genre of relationship appearing in memes such as those below. The image – of a male and female hugging – is contrary to local assumptions about gender having to exist in separate domains. This position is backed by evangelical Christian values, which promote the building of companionship between husband and wife and more broadly among the members of each church.



Fig. 3.30: Meme shared inside evangelical Christian circles about friendship between males and females. Text says: ‘There are friendships that I sincerely want to keep with me for all my life.’



Fig. 3.31: Evangelical Christians displaying friendship bonds that includes male and female teenagers.

While non-evangelical groups avoid bringing males and females together in photos, evangelical youth are less submissive to gender separations and display, as a sign of modernity and ‘civilized values’, that men and women can have relationships that are not necessarily romantic or sexual.

Couples, romance and marriage

As we move from the more informal display of people enjoying themselves to the more formal display of ‘couples’ per se, we also approach a very specific arena of ideal life, which comes from religious rather than secular roots.

Not many couples share photos of themselves together and those that do tend to be evangelical Christians. One of the forms they have of displaying their devotion to God is by portraying their fidelity in the marriage. One may do so by uploading wedding pictures. These formal celebrations, for the costs they imply and for being a practice more associated with wealthier sectors of society, are also displaying aspirations and prosperity.



Fig. 3.32: Evangelical Christians displaying marriage bonds.

Young unmarried couples that show themselves online do so following a path promoted by Christian churches and also associated with modernity about partners trusting one another.



Fig. 3.33: Evangelical Christians displaying romantic relationships.

The presence of evangelical Christian churches influences the general perception about what families are and how family members are expected to behave. Fathers, who traditionally are less involved in directly raising children, appear and display themselves on social media demonstrating intimacy with their offspring and side-by-side with their partner, emulating the structure of the nuclear family. Even non-evangelical couples feel the pressure to use these celebrations to appear modern and prosperous as opposed to 'backward' and 'impoverished'. Prosperity and modernity are represented by the abundance of food and also by the colourfulness of sweets and of the decoration.

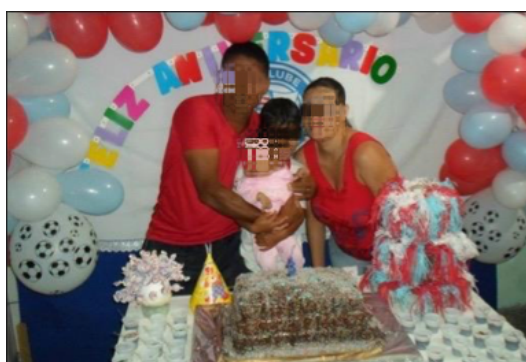


Fig. 3.34: Photo of nuclear family bonds.

The way these new notions of friendship and coupledness appear on social media also points to the value of using the type of material shown here. This visual content that informants themselves create and choose to display open possibilities to examine changes in the norms of relationships in a society.

3.3.4 Displaying faith

Evangelical Christians display their faith through following a rigorous dress code

Facebook in Balduino reflects the same concerns found offline in the public side of evangelical families. There, being an evangelical Christian is about getting one's Christianity 'out of the closet' – especially considering that 'evangelizing', as chapter one explained, is a distinguishing feature of this group. For them, the person's spirituality and morality need to be constantly socially exposed. Clothing is very important in that context as a marker of socioeconomic distinction and of moral evolution (as more sober items oppose the exposed sexuality related to prostitution and to infidelity). 'Proper clothing' shows an embrace of high culture, taste and also of Christian values. By following a similar dress code, they identify each other both on and offline and show their faith and commitment to the church.



Fig. 3.35: Evangelical Christians among church peers.



Fig. 3.36: Evangelical Christians singing during church service.



Fig. 3.37: Evangelical Christian couple displaying romantic bonds.

Evangelical Christians in Balduino are more concerned with evangelizing than with charitable activities. The act of promoting Christianity happens as they share personal testimonies of the works of God in their lives. Offline, we see this practice during church services and as part of everyday life through constantly mentioning and talking about religion. The same process of expressing and making one's faith visible appears on social media. Together with displaying prosperity and moral elevation, evangelical Christians display their faith on these platforms by sharing moral and religious memes.



Fig. 3.38: Evangelical Christian meme. The text reads: 'Everything that you value so much goes away and finishes. We do not choose to come to the world, but we have the right to choose where we want to spend eternity'.



Fig. 3.39: Evangelical Christian meme. The text reads: 'If you think that today is a day to THANK GOD, share.'



Fig. 3.40: Evangelical Christian meme. The text reads: ‘*How many times I attended service like that... There GOD spoke to me, and I left like this!!!*’

It may become easier to perceive of social media as lights on by considering that all the photos presented in this section expose elements of the users’ personal lives – their homes, relatives, peers, routines, religious practices, etc. – and are posted without content filters so as to be accessible by anybody using the same platforms. The term ‘lights on’ is a broad label to indicate a pattern that interconnects the images included in this section. It does not indicate a specific platform but a disposition to use social media to reach a certain audience, often with the motivation of showing off personal and family progress. And though this type of posting is more often shown on public-facing Facebook timelines, other spaces like WhatsApp groups can also serve the same purpose.

3.4 *Indireta* / penumbra

We have so far looked at images that work as advertising of the moral self (lights on) and of images that are exchanged secretly (lights off) because they refer to aspects of life deemed as backward, intimate or morally unacceptable. In this context, the *indireta* is a hybrid genre and, as previously discussed, a way for people to negotiate conflicts.

Indiretas in visual postings relate to a practice of communication in which people make conflicts public without directly referring to the other person (the opponent) involved in the matter. The fear of revenge and the caution to manage relationships are normally what limits the cases of direct confrontation between people with opposing interests. Offline, people ‘send an indirect’ [*manda a indireta*] by speaking out loud about a subject near the person that is being criticized but without addressing him or her directly. As the previous chapter shows, when it comes to social media, *indiretas* are often individual attacks that hint at a situation without naming the foe. This attack can be posted as a textual message, but also as a meme.

Memes are a popular way locals use to flag tensions that exist in their lives, both through humour and moralizing content, as ways to promote or reinforce social norms (Miller et al. 2016:155-180). Because *indiretas* represents a genre of posts that is popular nationally among certain socioeconomic and age groups, there are Facebook pages⁵³ that specialize in creating memes using indirect messages. In Balduino, these memes are sometimes shared with the purpose of attacking a person, but they are also frequently shared independently of a specific motivation to express agreement with the moral message. Taken outside of the context of a specific posting, these memes sound like a pessimistic kind of popular wisdom, but locals can connect information and interpret the message they carry.

3.4.1 Loss of trust

The loss of trust is usually related to gossiping. It refers to the situation of learning or deducing that someone previously considered a friend was spreading lies about them.



Fig. 3.41: Meme expressing loss of trust. The text reads: 'Be careful who you TRUST'.



Fig. 3.42: Meme expressing loss of trust. The text reads: 'People admire your virtues in silence and judge your vices publicly.'

⁵³ Typing '*indiretas*' on a Facebook search, the autocomplete function displays the following names of pages (which are originally in Portuguese): 'very direct indirects', 'direct indirects', 'feminist indirects', 'nerd indirects', 'photos of indirects to the repressed (*recalcadas*)', 'brutal indirects' and 'positive (*do bem*) indirects'.

**Deixa que falem
mal de ti, as
pessoas costumam
criticar quem elas
querem ser!**

Fig. 3.43: Meme expressing loss of trust. The text reads: ‘Let people say bad things about you, as they are fond of criticizing who they want to become!’



Fig. 3.44: Meme expressing loss of trust. The Text reads: ‘If I wanted to please everyone I would not have a Facebook profile. I would throw a barbecue party’.

Becoming someone’s friend on Facebook raises different expectations – as chapter four on intimacy addresses. Many complain about people that ‘friended’ them, but have never spoken to them. The meme below refers to this issue and displays the perception that Facebook is not as much about building relationships as it is a place for people to spy on each other.

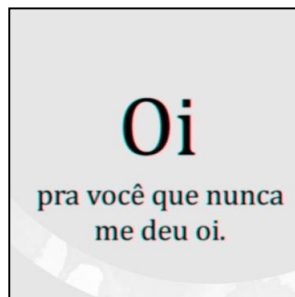


Fig. 3.45: Ironic meme about the idea that contacts on Facebook are friends. It reads: ‘Hi to you that never said hi to me’.

3.4.2 Religious differences

These conflicts also happen in the context of religious differences. Evangelical Christians are under constant criticism for being ‘snobs’, for ‘thinking they are better than others’, and for preaching about the spiritual world while accumulating wealth.



Fig. 3.46: Meme criticising the materialism of evangelical Christians. It reads: ‘Evangelicals always practice the love of others... As long as these others are also evangelicals.’

Within the church there are tensions emerging in Facebook postings when we see issues arising over inappropriate as well as appropriate behaviours. There are tensions among young people, especially girls, who are criticized for photos they upload on Facebook wearing clothes (during the service or in public) that are not seen as being acceptable for an evangelical person.

The image below critiques young girls that dress inappropriately, especially when it comes to going to church.



Fig. 3.47: Meme circulating inside evangelical Christian circles condemning improper dress codes. It reads: ‘Moderation!’



Fig. 3.48: Meme circulating inside evangelical Christians circles displaying the supposed decadence of values in society today. It reads above the photo: ‘My God!’ Below the photo: ‘People, the world is lost... 10-year-old girl pregnant. This happened in Bahia. Very sad this situation. Let’s pray for our children.’



Fig. 3.49: Meme circulating inside evangelical Christian circles displaying moral criticism concerning romantic relationships. It reads: ‘God does not destroy a family to create another one. [Longer text.] Think about this: to have an affair is to work for the devil.’

3.4.3 Generational conflicts



Fig. 3.50: Meme from a photo displaying the supposed decadence of values in society. Above it reads: ‘I agree, and you?’ The poster reads: ‘In Brazil, minors can: steal, kill, harass, sexually assault, burn people, be prostitutes [several other similar offenses], in Brazil minors cannot: work, be physically disciplined, or answer for his/her crimes. Wake up Brazil!’

3.5 Conclusion

During the early months of fieldwork, I assumed – based on my views about online privacy – that locals were less experienced users of social media because of the following reasons: 1) a lack of use of content filters; 2) adding people as contacts who they have never met (more about this in the next chapter); and 3) the use of public-facing online domains to show personal experiences to those not close to them. It was also intriguing to notice that events that everyone talked about in face-to-face conversations are often not posted on public facing Facebook timelines.

We often see social media services being conceived by companies or discussed in the media and also in scholarly analysis in relations to often vague ideas of privacy and

publicity⁵⁴. Facebook, for example, provides its users with features that aim to separate contacts according to levels of proximity (i.e. 'friends', 'acquaintances', etc.) or shared identity (i.e. 'family', 'school peers', etc.). Its content filters are meant to allow people to regulate access to information they post on their timelines. Similarly, on platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, content is by default shared 'publicly' (accessible to anyone), but users can restrict access to their posts by changing the settings. This chapter argues, however, that the particularities of social relations in the locality are better understood using the proposed notions of lights on and lights off as alternatives to private and public.

People in Balduíno have different necessities in relation to affluent urban users in Brazil. As chapter two shows, much of their online communication is among people that they already meet regularly, so channels such as Facebook and WhatsApp are often used to communicate with other locals beyond the sight of everyone else. In other words, it is the constant proximity to people – rather than the distance – that matters in relation to using social media. Even the interior of people's homes is not isolated from the outside. It is opaque communication that prevents male relatives and next-door neighbours within hearing distance from understanding certain conversations. Hence the effort to consider social media use in relation to traditional forms of communication.

In this chapter I suggest that similarly to opaque speech, locals in Balduíno often establish 'opaque places' which are only accessible to people that share the contextual information about their location and particular norms of conduct. This realization evolved from considering the contrasting living spaces that exist in the settlement. On one hand, there is the 'lights on' centre of Balduíno, the area that is historically more exclusive and expensive surrounding the highly visible catholic chapel. The opposite space consists of 'lights off' areas at the peripheries of the settlement, inhabited predominantly by illiterate peasants and fishermen, where several *candomblé* yards have been active but otherwise broadly indistinct from neighbouring plots. The consequences for communication and sociality are that central areas are constantly patrolled according to hegemonic moralities while peripheral fields enable locals to act following different moral norms.

⁵⁴ See Arora and Scheiber (2017) article comparing how low-income Indians and Brazilians exercise and express their notions of digital privacy. The following reference is from a news site that focus on science and technology. Arora, P. and Scheiber, L., 2017. Slumdog romance: Facebook love and digital privacy at the margins. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(3): 408-422. "Facebook Offers Indian Women Tools to Protect Privacy." *Phys.org.*, 22 June 2017. Web. 28 June 2017.

This chapter frames the meeting grounds in ‘digital’ Balduino following the same logic I use to describe the settlement’s offline space. There are lights on areas where locals present themselves expecting to be seen and morally patrolled. Given the wide exposition of places like Facebook timelines, locals generally post very controlled and morally accepted versions of their personal lives⁵⁵. Under the lights on frame, their disregard of content filters is not the result of inexperience, but actually an effort to project certain accomplishments such as displaying prosperity, wealth in terms of social bonds, religiosity or family values. In parallel to these situations, locals have lights off social places where people know they can discuss topics that are morally condemned. This second space relates to the notion of social narrowcasting discussed in the last section of chapter two.

This chapter’s final section also evolved from a discussion about *indiretas* that started in the previous chapter. The images I associate with *indiretas* are often shared on public-facing timelines, but as they are a form of indirection, they demand that the audience participate actively in the understanding of the message. To relate this aspect of social media use with the same metaphor about light, the last batch of images are referred to as having the intermediate quality of penumbra, as the situations and names of foes being attacked are not mentioned openly.

Comparing these types of content helps us to understand the roles these exchanges play in a context of intense social change. Locals are continuously looking back at traditions and contrasting them with the new possibilities now at hand in relation to family, gender, work, religion, sexuality and class. Lights on and lights off postings can be examined as expressions of locals challenging or maintaining their status quo in Balduino. Lights on images broadly show people’s individualistic achievements and/or their subordination to group; while lights off content shows locals breaking hegemonic norms but only in spaces hidden from others in the settlement. In the following chapter, I present the notions of ‘sandwiched living’, which similarly frames social relations in low income localities in Brazil as based on continuous attempts to achieve and deny individualism.

⁵⁵ These online places are similar also to other offline examples such as the living room of homes, which is where people often place their expensive products such as the television and the computer so that others passing by their windows will see, or specific types of clothes that locals wear on special occasions such as to go to church or to weddings.

4

Intimacy: dense networks

The aim of this thesis is to examine the impact social media has both individually and collectively on the lives of the predominantly low-income individuals and families residing in Balduino. As chapter one describes in detail, during the past few decades the largely isolated coastal area located to the north of the city of Salvador (in Bahia) has become a national and international touristic destination. In the subsequent chapters I have considered locals' uses and understandings of social media with respect to the traditional values and practices associated with language (chapter 2) and with the living spaces (chapter 3). Here I will discuss traditional and intimate (i.e. not institutionally mediated) forms of social bonds including very broad networks of support and extended family, the relationships of couples and also of parents with their children, to consider the effects that the interest and availability of social media has had in these domains.

It is common in Balduíno to hear locals talking nostalgically about ‘the time the settlement was like a family’. This refers to the period before the opening of the various roads in the region; when – as chapter one presents – their economy was rural. During this time, travelling to street fairs and markets in nearby cities consumed several hours either through sailing or by foot. When talking about these family relations that connected locals in the past, they mean it metaphorically to indicate how people trusted and supported each other, but also in some ways literally. In the 1950s, when only a few hundred people lived in the settlement, locals commonly married other locals or people from neighbouring localities. Consequently, in most cases, any one person could connect the various links associating him or her to the other residents. These connections could be traced by blood ties, marriage bonds, different forms of child adoption and fictive kin connections (e.g. godparents), which were especially important in the relationships between peasants and local proprietors and leaders (Norris 1984; Leeds 1994; Collabella 2010; Lima 1999; Wilkis 2016). Though old timers often complain about the growing number of outsiders [*gente de fora*] as the population swells from work migration, here and in other settlements in the Coconut Coast residents still retain dense forms of social relations. Many have local family ties, as the population live in a relatively small area and are in constant contact. ‘Networks of mutual help’ (Kunstadter 1963; Fonseca 2006; Frúgoli 2005) are often embedded in households (Pina-Cabral and Silva 2013:135; Marcelin 1999), together with the weak presence of public services to help individuals and families.

It is common belief that new technologies are corroding pre-existing relationships, as Turkle (2012) posits, but coming from a Western-focused perspective she generalizes trends towards reduced social interaction as being associated with new technologies. This ethnography suggests instead that in the highly intertwined social setting of Balduíno, the uses of social media do not necessarily promote individualism and can instead amplify existing dense relations as traditional communication strategies such as indirection are used also in the online domain. Given this context, I will consider some of the intimate relationships that exist in the settlement today⁵⁶ and examine how these bonds have been strengthened or weakened because locals now use social media.

⁵⁶ The sources available to examine intimate relations in the past are very limited. The history of illiterate poor Brazilians represents a challenge to scholars of the humanities, particularly when it comes to discussing the intimate domain, as this passage from Falci (2004: 241-277) addresses: ‘The

To consider how the low-income people of Balduino perceive what is intimate, it is useful to apply a sociological definition of intimacy. Zelizer (2005: 29) conceptualized that intimate associations are 'longer-term, wider-ranging, more intense relationships in which at least one party gains access to intimate' knowledge of physical, informational, and emotional details. In other words, Zelizer describes personal closeness in terms of the knowledge about a person that only very few others access. This definition needs to be considered in relation to the particularities of local social life, which will be presented in each section. Another advantage of using this definition is because it describes intimacy independent of it being neutral or positive. The intimate knowledge locals have of people in Balduino is often used for attacking and shaming. The importance of indirectness there, as chapters 2 and 3 suggests, derives from the efforts to create instances of private or secretive interaction.

4.1 Extended family boundaries

4.1.1 Friends and rivals

As chapter one shows, a very important topic of conversation in Balduino in recent decades has been about young people becoming less respectful to elders, especially to their parents and grandparents. This theme is often interconnected with the understanding that the state is partially responsible for this situation as it is now legally forbidden for people under 16 years old to work and for minors (under 18 years old) to go to jail when they break the law⁵⁷. The logic these informants follow is that young people are not learning the discipline of work from early age as they did in the past, that parents are not allowed to properly educate (beat) them, and young people are not being properly punished for involvement in criminal activities. Then from this subject – following the references to the growing cases of city-like often crime-related forms of violence associated with the lowering of trust between locals – the conversation about ungrateful offspring moves towards talking about the

free poor, the washerwomen, the vendors, the seamstresses and lacemakers - so well known in the songs of the Northeast -, the water pickers in the streams, the coconut breakers and midwives, all of these we have more difficulty to know: they did not leave properties after Death, and their children did not open inventory, they did not write or spoke of their yearnings, fears, anguish, because they were illiterate and had, in their day to day work, to fight for survival. If they dreamed, to survive, we cannot know'.

⁵⁷ Depending on the case, underage criminals are taken to juvenile facilities and incarceration time is reduced compared to adult criminals.

increasing population of outsiders [*gente de fora*] in Balduíno. Outsiders⁵⁸, they argue, and particularly those arriving from cities, are bringing in bad ideas and attitudes and teaching the local youth to be materialistic, promiscuous and lazy. This is also a sensitive subject in the settlement and locals, especially those whose families have been living there for several generations, will talk about how nowadays they cannot leave their doors unlocked because unknown outsiders will come in and steal their things, or how a man cannot resolve disputes in a ‘manly’ way [*como homem*] anymore, because the current opponent, being an anonymous stranger, does not have local ties and might have a gun and decide to kill you. The decrease in peace and cooperation is seen as a consequence of how locals are less and less able to recognize one another, who each person’s families are and where their relatives live.

However, in different contexts, these same locals will also say very naturally about the settlement that ‘everyone knows everyone’ there [*todo mundo se conhece*]. On the one hand, they complain bitterly about the loss of trust due to the increasing number of strangers in the locality and on the other they say that nobody living there is actually a stranger because everyone knows everyone. This apparent contradiction is useful for beginning a section about intimate relationships outside of the family domain⁵⁹ as it is informative of the internal categories that people there have to indicate proximity. This is useful for understanding the criteria locals use to add people to their networks online.

4.1.2 Levels of closeness

Balduíno is a settlement of about fifteen thousand people so, at first, the expression that everyone knows everyone seems an exaggeration. What exactly do locals mean by this and what kind of knowledge do they actually have of every other person? To find out, one day I invited two of my research assistants to sit at a bar table at the sidewalk of the settlement’s busiest street to check what they could tell me about any people passing. After about one hour, my young local assistants had identified nearly everyone that we saw, though it is important to clarify the kind of knowledge they mean when it comes to knowing everyone.

⁵⁸ A classic sociological study on this topic is: Elias and Scotson (1994).

⁵⁹ Koury (2005) has mapped the growing body of literature produced in Brazil on the anthropology of emotions and according to this work, the topic of non-kin attachment beyond urban middle class settings in Brazil is currently understudied.

On a few occasions, they knew the passing person's name and details of his or her family history in the settlement. More often they did not know the name but mentioned the part of the settlement he or she lived and broad information (such as if the person hung out [*tinha amizade*] with 'bad people' or belonged to a certain church). The most common type of information they presented was the associations connecting themselves with each person passing. For instance, they would say: 'he is the cousin of the son-in-law of my aunt's former next door neighbour' or 'she used to be the partner of a man who worked as kitchen assistant at the hotel together with my brother'.

Considering the results of this experiment in the context of the wider ethnography, it became apparent that knowing everyone did not mean having an active relationship with most of the other residents. I noted three increasingly intimate categories of proximity: first, knowing someone 'by sight' [*de vista*] (recognising them mainly in terms of common relationships); second, between people who greet one another as they walk past in the streets⁶⁰ and thirdly, the people that enter each other's homes, are strongly connected and are more actively part of each other's networks of solidarity through the display of mutual respect [*consideração*] (Pina-Cabral and Silva 2013: 29). However, as I discuss ahead, the settlement does not correspond to one network. Local relationships are dynamic and constantly renegotiated as networks of mutual help generate both hate and friendship (Fonseca 2000: 14-15). Two people that once were close associates might now refuse to greet each other on the street. At times this happens because they had a dispute leading to a relationship breakdown, but more commonly this happens because one of them joins an evangelical church, stops socializing in bars or attending events that involve consuming alcohol, and avoid being seen on friendly terms with someone that is not baptized according to Protestant norms. Greeting is a traditional form of displaying and publicly acknowledging closeness in the region⁶¹, but to speak or not to speak with each other does not necessarily indicate the level of knowledge that people have about others.

⁶⁰ For a bibliography review of anthropological research on greeting, see: Durant (1997). Greeting is examined in the context of low-income urban settings in the following papers: Lyons (2005) and Kivland (2014).

⁶¹ Locals are sensitive to these displays of distinction/superiority and a case of avoiding greeting a person is normally interpreted as being very offensive, so an initial sign of distancing from another person tends to escalate and become more serious separations. And yet, depending on the necessity or the circumstance, these differences can also be renegotiated.

This brief introduction helps to consider the criteria which local young people in the settlement use to decide whom to add as 'friends' on their social media. Particularly the category of knowing by sight is valuable to understand why many local users regularly add people from distant places that they have never talked with, seen or met before, and yet these contacts are not seen as strangers.

4.1.3 Adding mutual friends

As happens in other places and socioeconomic contexts – such as with the teenagers in the United States that boyd (2005) studied – to most teenagers in Balduino having a great number of 'friends' on social media reflects positively on the person's popularity. Consequently, using social media is often talked about with excitement while also demanding engagement that shows this is a serious matter to the person speaking. For example, a mother told me that her 13-year-old begged her to 'do like the other mums' and punish him with beatings, but not to forbid him from using Facebook. Talking to these local teenagers, I often had the impression that being on Facebook for them was an obligation similar to working; it consumed time, had to happen regularly, included particular aims, required effort but in exchange produced a certain value they could use to measure personal prestige. Like having an office job, they stare at a screen and often suffer with pressures to perform. In Balduino, one of the consequences that shows their efforts to outperform others in gaining online friends and popularity is to be temporarily suspended on Facebook from sending friendship requests. This is an automatic restriction imposed on people who send large numbers of requests and have many of these requests denied. However, teens often talk about these suspensions with an underlying sense of pride as the punishment indicates their dedication to social media while also suggesting that they have access to a private computer to be able to spend so many hours online.

Wellington is one of these teenagers. Being 17-years-old, he lives with his mother and a younger brother in an area relatively far from the settlement's centre – reflecting the limited income of his family. He goes to school in the morning and works in the afternoon at a local printing shop. The shop pays him little but enables him to stay nearby and have occasional access to social media during working hours. Though clearly enthusiastic about computers and internet, Wellington does not demonstrate this excitement by talking about a video he saw online, content he downloaded or about making friends around the world.

Instead, he constantly mentions numbers in relation to his success online. He has over two thousand friends and most nights (after he pretends to go to bed and his mother goes to sleep) he socializes on Facebook until it is time for him to go to school. He is most proud of the number of his online friends that are active at night (a high number, proportional to the number of his Facebook friends): between 8pm and midnight ‘over one hundred people!’ are simultaneously connected and available to chat with him. More than enjoying the conversations he has online, Wellington refers to the experience of daily chatting with his online contacts as a difficult task to be accomplished. ‘It’s tough! I can barely speak to so many people at once!’ His computer screen during these hours shows many chat windows open and, unless he is talking with a potential romantic partner or with a close associate, conversations seem mechanical. He does not know personally most of his online friends and his aim is to carry as many chat exchanges as it is possible. As the use of WhatsApp spread among teenagers, locals reported similar behaviour, such as teenagers sleeping while holding their phone in front of their faces to then wake up and promptly reply to any incoming messages.

In the settlement, there is the category of knowing someone by sight which is presented in relation to shared connections, however, on social media, this corresponds to having common online friends. Local teenagers do not consider adding people they have never seen or talked with before to be a problem. In a similar fashion to the face-to-face version, knowing someone by sight on Facebook is a category of relationship that can entail, but that often does not demand specific behaviour, such as having to greet each other online. It is generally good enough to be able to exhibit these contacts as ‘friends’ on their Facebook profile and to use them to add new contacts.

However, social media becomes complicated to manage when it involves local relationships. When it comes to ‘friending’ locally, there are peers that people already hang out with and it is expected that they will use social media to communicate with each other; but there are other locals that they know only by sight. Being online allows individuals to reach out to these distant contacts and connect with them with a degree of privacy that was less available in the past. But while sending a friendship request to someone outside the settlement does not make that an active/participant relationship, locals that receive friendship requests from other locals often interpret it as an act of greeting and raise their expectations about future interactions. Those sending the requests find it considerably

simpler and more painless in comparison to walking up to the person offline they already know by sight and asking if she or he wants to be friends with him.

If the other person accepts the online request, there are typically two common outcomes. Some informants report that the newly opened channel of communication is followed by an awkward silence. Others explain that the new relationship takes off online: the two actively like each other's postings, leave comments, and above all they greet and chat constantly when they note that the other is online. The problem arises when these two people cross each other on the streets. Both expect to be greeted (as they now have a new level of closeness), but both become afraid of the other person 'turning the head away' [*virar a cara*]: a rejection seen as a public embarrassment as the rejected will be ridiculed and made fun of by his or her associates.

This common situation – waiting to be greeted before reciprocating – tends to produce bitter feelings in the person that received the request. As the expected friendship does not blossom offline, locals commonly interpret the friendship request as a trick by the other person to gain access to their postings and online activities and consequently to spy and gossip about them.

4.1.4 Rivalry as social glue

I started this section providing a schematic view of how locals relate to each other outside of family boundaries. They associate with others roughly in three distinct levels: there is knowing by sight, greeting (which implies publicly acknowledging a relationship and sharing of information), and finally there is the condition of greater closeness between people that enter each other's homes.

Nurturing these closer ties is very important and can be examined as a form of 'gift giving' (Mauss 1957; Fonseca 2003:23) as public services in the region are still precarious and information and support are items commonly offered in and outside family networks. If someone needs to urgently go to a hospital – the nearest ones are about one hour away by car – he or she will most likely travel in a private car driven by a neighbour rather than in a (scarce, public) ambulance. Instead of calling the official number for the police, locals needing a quicker response may call friends that work at the police. It is a long-standing tradition in the region for groups of men to gather on Saturdays to help to build a house for a local family, a practice called '*bater laje*' (Palmer 2014). However, relations between

locals are not always friendly and supportive, and the boundaries of each person's network of support constantly changes. Adult women and their offspring are known for repelling families of newcomers, sometimes through violence⁶². Belonging to the settlement also implies being constantly subjected to silent informal scrutiny; everyone is constantly paying attention and gossiping about everyone else, as that is, among other consequences, instrumental to impose social norms⁶³ and definition of the limits of the group (Fonseca 2000: 23). The practice of spying and gossiping in Balduíno can also be examined as a type of 'levelling mechanism' (Hoggart 2009) for social regulation, theorized in a reciprocal collective context (Sarti 1994:195-211) of 'limited good'⁶⁴ (Foster 1965, 1967, 1972; Kottak 1967, 2008:58) considering, in this Bahian settlement, the shared assumption that anything that takes place in secret is potentially a threat to everyone else. 'Otherwise, why would the person want to conceal it?', is how they justify this interest. The information that is hidden (about illnesses, infidelity and crime) circulates both as a way to display affinity among allies, but also as means to attack the reputation of foes.

Studying low-income populations in Brazil since the 1980s, Fonseca (2000:47-58) theorized that rivalry and internal antagonisms represent a key formative element of these communities. In other words, for her the social glue that bonds people together in settlements like Balduíno is not their solidarity against 'common enemies' such as the rich, but the on-going disputes and disagreements. 'Under this light, the community appears still with defined boundaries, but what stand out, above all, are the heterogeneous nature and the changing status of its members' (Fonseca 2000:48). Relationships are forged initially not with the intention of providing help and support to others living in similar conditions, but as forms of protection. People establish alliances as they feel threatened or distanced

⁶² Different from women and children, men tend to be welcoming and helpful to newcomers. Kottak's (2008: 64-65) ethnography on a neighbouring settlement in Bahia presents similar evidences.

⁶³ Also about modes of social regulation, see: Comerford (2003 25; 30-34; 60-63; 81-85; 130-132), Gluckman (1963), Paine (1967), Haviland (1977: 1-27), Elias and Scotson 1994: 121- 133), Simmel (1950: 330-44).

⁶⁴ A local driver working in Balduíno exemplified about what could otherwise be called corruption but that under his framing indicated a perception of limited good. He explained that it was only fair that hotel owners gave money to the police (he did not use the negative word 'bribing') in exchange for the police not giving tickets to hotel vehicles recurrent illicit parking. As he understands, "where a person eats, everyone eats", meaning that if the hotel is making money, others in the locality should have also a share.

from other groups, and these ties are constantly being re-worked according to the changes of contexts and events.

Fonseca's theorizing reflects the continuous forging and breaking of relationships in Balduíno. I mentioned above how families or individuals who become part of Pentecostal churches must constantly demonstrate publicly that they are behaving accordingly. But the social dynamics inside churches are equally tense, with a requirement to have close friends within the church and regularly attend services. At the local Assembly of God, church members make great efforts to discuss and participate in internal 'informal politics' (Painter and Jeffrey 2009), as chapter six shows. For example, an important current theme that divides the congregation relates to the importance given to financial prosperity (see also chapter one), which is debated both abstractly but also in response to the institutional roles that the head-minister controls and distributes as he sees fit. In this context, the community gossips about, for instance, the head-minister's high salary⁶⁵ and of the privileges he has, such as not having to pay for petrol or for many of his travel expenses. Some also condemn him for giving prestigious positions in the local church hierarchy to the most prosperous because, they explain, these wealthier people's tithe (a tenth of an individual's income pledged to the church) amounts to a lot of money, while he is less generous in offering positions to others who work hard for the church but are struggling financially and are not paying or only have little to give away. These disputes are not obvious to outsiders but they are an integral part of belonging to the Assembly of God in Balduíno. Applying Fonseca's argument, it is the heterogeneous boundaries and internal disputes that makes that church a community and bonds a certain group together.

4.1.5 'Sandwich living' and social media

As chapters one and three show, aspiration and resentment against socioeconomic distinction are not subjects important only to these Protestants. The tensions that result from wanting to be part of the local networks of solidarity are common among low-income urban Brazilians. These tensions are prominent in local everyday relations also because of

⁶⁵ According to the circulating gossip, the head minister earns in Balduíno something between ten and fifteen times the minimum wage, a salary that is compatible with the monthly earnings of that of an affluent hotel executive in the region.

the recent developments in the region that have lead to increasing possibilities of labour which attracts large numbers of migrant workers.

One of the field sites Fonseca researched to discuss ‘sandwich living’ is a low-income neighbourhood in Porto Alegre, a city in the Southern region of the country that has been strongly influenced by the arrival of European migrants in the past 150 years. But despite the distance and many cultural particularities separating South and Northeast Brazil, there are important similarities between this field site Fonseca studied and Balduino. Like the people I was more constantly in contact with during my research, her informants were neither the most vulnerable (those living in complete informality such as beggars or informal collectors of discarded things) nor the disciplined workers with stable professions and values similar to those of the more affluent classes (Fonseca 2000:47). Considering this background, she then proposes the notion of sandwiched living [*vida em sanduíche*] to represent this group positioned in-between those living in the condition of poverty and the strata better trained to formal labour and more aligned with the values of the country’s affluent classes.

Like those who participated in her study, most of my informants in Balduino are employed as low-income manual labourers (cooks, watchmen, cleaners), are civil servants or own small businesses (bars, hair salons). As Fonseca (2000:47) puts it, ‘their practices reflected the little influence of the “normalizing” forces’ such as schooling and access to banking services. In this volatile precarious situation, rivalry and antagonism are an integral characteristic of social relations⁶⁶. People are constantly alternating between on one hand individualism, aiming to distinguish themselves from the even poorer, and, on the other hand, solidarity to avoid the opposite situation of achieving too much distinction, which then leads to social isolation (Fonseca 2000:58).

More than other groups in Balduino, teenagers find themselves intensely intertwined in this experience of seeking distinction while also displaying affinity, showing

⁶⁶ In Balduino, I noticed an aspect of ‘sandwiched living’ that Fonseca does not refer to and I mention it here only briefly, suggesting that it can be useful to other researchers. Sandwiched living refers to the antagonism inside a given low-income community; yet locals in Balduino also talked about the antagonism that existed *between* communities, which were also based on competition. Adult men today talk about a common ‘adventure’ of going to traditional parties in neighbouring locations in groups to pick up fights with young adults there. Informants explain that these disputes were expressed in terms of economic or cultural distinction. For example, in a locality that benefited earlier from tourism those locals disdained neighbours as being backward [*ignorantes*].

off prosperity while avoiding being singled out and cast aside as pretentious and arrogant. There are many examples from everyday experiences and routines related to this. A school principal mentioned that her poorest students, who must work full-time and consequently attend classes at night, had started coming to school wearing Kenner, an upscale brand of sandals. She brought up this example not only because buying this product costs a lot of money for them, but due to the curious visual effect of these posh sandals appearing as part of the school uniform in this poor settlement, on the feet of its poorest students. Ultimately, buying a Kenner sandal is a display of financial achievement that does not make the wearer distinguished, it makes them equal to everyone else around them. Similar efforts exist through established practices such as: two or three close peers coordinating to go to school on a given day wearing the same new clothes and accessories (e.g. Nike tennis shoes, a Cyclone shirt, and an Adidas backpack). Each asks his or her parents to buy the items while saying that other parents are doing the same for their offspring. Older teens also often order special personalized t-shirts to go to events such as concerts or parties as they want to be visually identified there as a group and similar among each other.

Digital technology and social media are part of these negotiations in sandwich living. People constantly point out about their neighbours: ‘this family cannot even properly dress their children and yet they pay to have cable TV at home’ or ‘they buy branded clothes for their children but don’t care if they learn to read or not’. A teacher who was born and raised at a neighbouring settlement told me of a recent meeting he had with the mother of a student. He explained that the family of this student was particularly vulnerable: a mother alone in the house to support four children, which she had had by three different men. Their home, still under construction, is at a plot far from the centre and it does not have doors and windows – ‘not even in the bathroom!’. However, the mother, who works as a cleaning lady and was recently fired from her formal job at a hotel, spent most of the money she received as compensation (R\$ 2,000 / US\$ 1,000) to buy an expensive mobile phone for her 17-year-old daughter. With this teacher, we again hear the type of criticism that locals use to separate themselves from those below them socio-economically. But the teacher also acknowledges that the purchase of the (perceived) superfluous item at the end does not make its owner distinguished. The peers this student hangs out with are of a similar struggling background and all of them have similar relatively high-end smartphones.

These events also commonly happen online. Chapter three shows how public facing Facebook timelines and social media are used to show distinction and conformity at the same time. Many of the photos posted relate to attempts to display a kind of ‘beauty’ often associated with consumption: wearing makeup, having branded clothes, going to the gym, having a smartphone, consuming expensive food and drinks, etc. But the images that go on social media also often include peers that share the same types of photos displaying consumption; posting such photos is tied with the expectation of receiving endorsement. Showing oneself as prosperous and aspiring while also avoiding being considered arrogant [*se achar*] is part of the overall movement and practices to make and break alliances. It is important to display oneself together with some products recognized as prestigious, but local teenagers are so worried about the approval of others that they take down photos that receive few likes and comments.

4.1.6 Extended families and social media

To finish this section, I describe a WhatsApp group that interconnects members originally from the hinterlands of Bahia state that now live in different parts of the country.

One of the families I became closer to in Balduino, the Vieira, has had a typical experience as low-income work migrants (Velho 2008). Their parents were born in what appears to have been a *quilombo* - a rural land originally populated by runaway slaves and occasionally also inhabited by Amerindian individuals and families. With the severe drought of the 1950s, the whole Vieira family except for the patriarch (who remained behind to look after their land) took the train and migrated to a small city in the coastal area of Alagoas, a state neighbour to Bahia. After some years, this original group parted, some going back to their original land in the Bahian hinterlands, some choosing instead to move to Salvador to have better work opportunities. The ones arriving in Salvador settled in the fringes of the city in the 1960s, but the growing migration and the parallel growth of violence⁶⁷ made part of this group relocate to the Coconut Coast. So now the family is distributed in three different places: the original farm (that is currently urbanizing and merging with a close-by settlement), the peripheries of Salvador and different locations at the Coconut Coast. Those living in the original settlement also live in the family’s original

⁶⁷ The neighbourhood they lived in Salvador, which became a favela, is called ‘Palestine’.

land but leave seasonally to work in big construction projects in different parts of the country, so they spend several months per year away, then come back to their families with money.

The members of this extended family have never lost contact with each other, especially as those that moved away are constantly visiting the original land, a process that is described by some as being a quasi-religious experience that happen to celebrate their family bonds and the bonds with that space. However, now many of these family members are synchronously united inside a WhatsApp group they named (after a famous television soap opera): “Family Rings”⁶⁸. Nearly 90 family members, including children, living in various parts of the country are part of the group.

Now that they can communicate easily and at very low cost, the participants of this WhatsApp group publish hundreds of messages daily that in general have the intention of only greeting and wishing everyone a good day or a good night. They also constantly post selfies and memes of different types, share work opportunities, engage in light and quick conversations about politics during election campaigns, share music and TV clips about stories of personal overcoming, photos of the bodies of people killed in their localities, share hoaxes and tragic news happening in their communities and elsewhere, and occasionally also post some light but disturbing content such as those presented on chapter three. Evangelical Christians are not the majority, but there participate intensely sharing religious memes – see more on chapters three and six. As grown-ups keep in touch with the people they have known in person, the current fourth-generation young relatives (those who were not as attached to the family and identify predominantly with their actual places of residence) are now in touch with these other networks of family members.

The following section considers social media and its effects on different aspects of family life in Balduino. We start by examining partnership bonds between men and women and at the end move to the relationships between parents and offspring.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The actual English title “Family Ties” in my opinion misses an emotionality that resonates from the original soap opera title “Laços de Família”, which was aired in prime time Brazilian TV in 2001. About soap operas in Brazil, see: Almeida (2003), Leal (1986) e Hamburger (2005).

⁶⁹ For this section, though both male and female homosexuality have been common and publicly visible in the settlement since at least the recent past, given space constraints the cases discussed here are only of heterosexual relations.

4.2 Couples

4.2.1 Trust, infidelity and spying

There is a vast anthropological literature about low-income families (e.g. Duarte and Campos Gomes 2008; Fonseca 2000), low-income families in Bahia (e.g. Pina-Cabral and Silva 2013; Agier 2007), gender (e.g. Angelin and Truzzi 2015; Santos 2009; Salem 2006; Fonseca 2000) and race in Brazil (e.g. Moutinho 2004; Goldstein 1999; 2013) and more specifically in Bahia (e.g. McCallum 1999, 2005, 2012; Agier 1995; Butler 1998). This body of literature expands further as it interconnects with other important themes such as religion, media, and domestic violence among others.

If, in general, we need to avoid speaking about the homogeneity of working class Brazilians (Fonseca 2000:47), this seems especially important in Balduíno given the plethora of change that has happened in only a few decades: different groups of migrant workers arriving to an old but also rapidly transforming location in the country. This was a decadent rural settlement where proprietors and even their direct subordinates during most of the 20th century had informal rights to have more than one partner and therefore be the head of multiple families, a practice that has not completely gone away (Falci 2004). More recently, regional economic development began attracting people mainly from the hinterlands of Bahia and from the state capital. In recent squatting areas, the residents often live side by side with other newly migrant ‘strangers’, but it is still common to see family plots or even sections of streets where multiple houses are inhabited by relatives, as described by Durham (1973), Agier (1990), Viveiros de Castro (2007). Those arriving from Salvador metropolitan area often come from favela-like settings. Other new residents are coming directly from rural areas and experiencing for the first time living in urban-like working class dormitory settlement. With respect to family traditions and practices, then, Balduíno today has these multiple influences.

But also, the locality that had very little state infrastructure until the 1980s now has three public schools, a health centre, a police station, a mail office and a branch of the national welfare service. Institutional relations – e.g. public servants providing government services – that did not exist are now closer to people. Transportation and communication are part of nearly everyone’s everyday lives, so travelling to Salvador, the state capital, speaking on mobile phones and now using mobile internet is not a privilege limited to affluent local families. These, plus different forms of media channels including cable TV

and internet, and the large presence of evangelical Christian organizations also influence the habits and practices of ways relationships within local families are now formed, maintained, or broken in the settlement. In short, although I will refer to various cases and characteristics of family relations in these next sections, they do not form a model that is necessarily homogenous in the settlement.

4.2.2 Sex and marriage

Sex is a constant subject of conversation in the settlement⁷⁰. Both men and women joke, brag and gossip about it conspicuously. I was once participating at an afternoon-long catholic festivity that started with a procession and soon turned into drinking and dancing, and overheard Antonia, a 50-year-old woman well known in the settlement, mother of seven grown-up children, talking at a bar table about her young boyfriend's voracious sexual appetite and of the three dildos she owns and uses while watching porn. Evangelical Christians from the Assembly of God have special retreats meant to strengthen the intimacy of couples and according to its participants, I would be surprised of the conversations they have regarding ways to spice up their sex lives. Yet sexuality is also constantly being controlled (Fonseca 2000:69-84). Men and women categorically avoid being seen publicly interacting with a non-relative of the opposite sex as such interactions quickly become rumours about illicit affairs. Parents often forbid their adolescent daughters from having boyfriends and only agree to premarital relationships if they happen under supervision.

Marriages are common among evangelical Christians, but outside of such religious circles similar unions can be represented by the act of moving in together, a practice predominant in low-income families (Soihet 1997; Fonseca 2000:16) tracing back to certain Amerindian traditions (Raminelli 1997). In spite of the contradictory morals, a large body of literature describe that historically, as well as in the present low-income population, women often get pregnant as a consequence of casual relations during their teenage years (Heilborn, Salem, Rohden, Brandão, Knauth, VÍctora, Aquino, McCallum, and Bozon 2002;

⁷⁰ Brazilian sexuality is at the beginning of Brazilian social sciences, being a core topic in Freyre's (1970) classic work. Goldstein (2013) analyses the topic based on an ethnography of low wage population in Rio de Janeiro indicating how the 'sex-positiveness' of Brazilians needs to be pondered through a feminist critique of gendered power relations and normative heterosexual relations.

Aquino, Heilborn, Knauth, Bozon, Conceição Almeida, Araújo, and Menezes, 2003; Cabral 2003; Dias and Teixeira 2010; McCallum and Reis 2005; McCallum and Reis 2006).

Occasionally, the girl's partner and/or her family would build her a house for them to use. When the first partner leaves⁷¹, this house will then shelter the various partners she would have children with during her life. These temporary relationships help to cover the household expenses while living there. As the woman's earlier children grow up and begin to work, her dependence on other men for protection and money decreases. Before that, mother and children act in alliance to make sure the current partner works and provides for the household. Lorian, a 24-year-old mother of five, lives in a squatting area with three of her five children. Every day that her partner finds a temporary job as a builder, she sends her eldest, an eight-year-old boy, to follow him to work to make sure he does not get drunk during the lunch break and that he brings the money back at the end of the shift.

4.2.3 The expectation of infidelity

In Balduino, non-evangelic heterosexual men generally perceive masculine infidelity (the possibility of having multiple parallel sexual relationships) very positively⁷². They speak about it recurrently, and demonstrate pride in having lovers and engage in casual adventures. Armando, a 29-year-old taxi driver, is married now to his former lover but has now a new lover whom he protects and helps financially. He has two daughters of other previous relationships, the older one being 16 years old. André, a fisherman, told me proudly of the love he has for his partner Helena, adding that after 30 years together they still have good sex. Though every time his partner finds out about a new girlfriend he has, he sleeps 'with one eye open' as he is scared that she will take revenge and throw boiling water on his face when he is sleeping. Luiz, also a taxi driver, talks without inhibition of the affairs he has with single mature women that he meets through his work and of his adventures with '*novinhas*'⁷³ [young women, often in their teens]. He does not consider breaking up with his long time partner because, as he says, these other romances are temporary and young girls today are only '*piriguetes*' [materialistic] (Cerqueira Lana,

⁷¹ Matrilocality is a theme I discuss in the following section about parenthood.

⁷² About masculinity in Bahia, see for example: Souza (2010) and Pinho (2005, 2014).

⁷³ The Brazilian popular expression '*novinha*' is so popular and powerful that it is the only non-English word that appears among the most used search words in pornographic websites. The Economist, 2015. Naked capitalism.

Corrêa and Rosa 2012). ‘They don’t care for love’. His partner, he explains, will be there to care for him when he is old.

Historically among low-income women in urban Brazil, male infidelity appears as a passive circumstance. Men were not viewed as particularly responsible as it is expected of them to have ‘weaknesses’ that justified them falling for seduction (Soihet 1997). Sarti’s (1994:81) ethnography about low-income families in São Paulo refers to a reciprocity among partners, one in which the woman’s body is the retribution for the man who provides material means to the household. These apply to heterosexual women in Balduíno as they often talk about their partner’s infidelity as being mainly the responsibility of the other women. The understanding is that men ‘have their needs’ and women use their bodies and sexuality to manipulate men and ‘steal’ them from their families, so they can benefit from their support.

Although during the ethnography I heard considerably fewer cases of infidelity from women, the reason is likely to be that this topic is not discussed as openly. Writing about working class women in early 20th century urban settings, Soihet (1997) argues that masculine infidelity was considered as a private issue while female infidelity constituted a crime. Pedro, a close informant whose parents moved to Balduíno in the 1970s from the hinterlands, says that infidelity is not exclusive to men. He mentions that none of his seven siblings married ‘*nativos*’ [people from local families] because in their view neither the women nor the men born in that region make trustable partners. And the two openly gay women in Balduíno that I interviewed spoke of many local women having affairs and even simultaneous relationships with other women.

Echoing Iberian traditions that associate masculinity with control over female sexuality (Peristiany 1965), local men are praised and respected for their infidelities, being socially haunted by the possibility of being made a cuckold [*cornio*] by his partner. This form of infidelity is often mentioned through humour and/or in association to tragic events. I heard locals referring to female infidelity as a curse or a transmitted disease, and it is considered a family matter when men decide to physically punish the women that have these affairs. I was told of a house in the settlement that is empty because the owner’s wife betrayed him, and people are afraid the same might happen to them if they rent it and move into the house. There are many jokes about this topic and being called a *cornio* is

highly offensive. It is also common to hear that men become alcoholics because his partner abandoned him.

4.2.4 Romance, infidelity and social media

One of the clear perceptions about social media in Balduino is that it represents a precious mine for romance. There are several reasons for this view. Firstly, the sheer increase in the number of people that now can be reached beyond the constraints of time and space; second, the possibility of contacting people privately and communicating with them discreetly; and third, the access that services like Facebook and Orkut offer for its users to navigate others' friends lists (Ellison and boyd 2007). In an environment where people are acutely aware of and exposed to social control through gossiping and rumours, being able to easily and cheaply reach potential new partners explains the perception that social media is – for good and for bad – a playground for romance. Therefore, these perceived advantages represent an important part of the reasons locals learn to use computers, spend money at internet cafés and buy smartphones. Given the significance that having a prodigious sex life has socially for men, it is perhaps less surprising that functionally illiterate (older) men engage in writing to flirt and coordinate secret meetings with lovers using texting and now social media⁷⁴.

This interest in romance through social media is a topic in itself but also relates to different subjects that people of the settlement talk about, such as: social media being a catalyst and promoter of infidelity; social media offering alternatives for new forms of distant relationships; social media enabling the distribution and consumption of amateur porn; social media being the publicist of revenge porn and other types of public shaming (such as students uploading and sharing videos of school fights), and social media becoming a new ground of action for sex predators [*tarados*].

The perceived advantage that WhatsApp has in relation to flirting and infidelity is that the service automatically accesses the users' mobile phone contacts and adds them as WhatsApp contacts. Like texting, WhatsApp is used, among other things, to broadcast messages to different groups. These messages are often religious stories with moralistic conclusions, humour and announcements considered to be of public interest. This practice

⁷⁴ Fonseca (2000:59-68) writes about literacy among low-income Brazilians, that romance is also the only instance that motivated her informants to practice writing.

can then become an icebreaker between people that only know each other 'by sight' and these exchanges eventually lead to secret romances. On top of this, unmarried young locals are now creating WhatsApp groups populated by people that they know but who are not necessarily friends, or who only know each other 'by sight'. An informant added me to some of these groups and they struck me to be like a variation of speed dating events: after individuals are added to a chat group with a few dozen strangers they subsequently publish greeting notes and selfies so that others in the group know them visually to decide whether to begin a private conversation. The intention of the creator is to gather enough active participants so that they will constantly add more people (which displays the popularity of the group creator). Many such experiments have interactions lasting only a few days.

4.2.5 Social media and spying

When asked to say what they think about social media, some locals' initial reactions display frustration because of the stress they say using Facebook and WhatsApp brings to their lives. In this case, they are referring to the problems they experience because it is not uncommon for personal profiles to be accessed by people close to them. Adults that have limited computer skills need the help of young relatives or friends to create and sometimes to access their account on Facebook, so the passwords of adult relatives are often known by others. Since these situations often produce tension, both men and women talk about closing their Facebook accounts when they enter more serious relationships, as social media is normally seen as a driver of infidelity. Not being on Facebook then means that they do not have to worry about contacting and being contacted by other people or that their partners will attempt to spy on their lives by secretly accessing their profiles.

That is not to say that people failed to spy on each other prior to the existence of social media. As chapters two and three show, locals are constantly aware that they are being observed. This interest in the private lives of others becomes more evident considering the sophistication and audacity of these acts now that social media is available. Clarissa, a 16-year-old evangelical Christian, had been dating Allan since she was 12 and he was 15. They are from the same church and most of their social lives take place in religious contexts. When she broke up the relationship with him, two things happened: first, many of their church friends sided with him and second, her friends in general were curious to learn the true reason for the separation. Since both are active evangelical

Christians, other locals wondered if the end of the relationship was due to infidelity on either side. It was in this context that she noted that her peers were asking to see pictures on her phone (a common request) and then, with the phone turned away from her sight, they would open her WhatsApp to look at who she was talking to and what the conversations were about. This happened repeatedly until she installed an app to lock her WhatsApp so that she could still hand her unlocked phone to people knowing they would not spy on her private exchanges.

This type of tension relating social media and infidelity appears also on a comic video clip⁷⁵ that circulated widely in the settlement. It is an enactment of a situation in which a boyfriend is having a heart attack and his girlfriend's mobile does not have battery, so he chooses to die instead of giving her the password to unlock his own phone and call an ambulance.

Many partners successfully guessed and secretly saved their partner's Facebook password on the web browser to monitor private conversations. Roberta, a 29-year-old teacher, kept in touch with me through Facebook because she proposed to take me to see a group of folk dancers from a neighbouring settlement. Our exchanges were only occasional, with her apologising for being busy and not yet able to find out the dates of the group's rehearsals. Though one day, several months since becoming friends online with Roberta, I received a message with several misspellings and grammar mistakes saying that she did not want to speak to me again. A couple of weeks later, the sender wrote a more direct message saying: 'Hey partner, this woman is married, so you better stay away from her or things will get ugly'. Some days after that, Roberta herself contacted me also using Facebook chat to talk about the rehearsal. Apparently, her partner had been accessing her Facebook profile while she was away, making threats to every man he did not know, then erasing the messages so she would not find out what he had done and he could carry on monitoring her conversations.

Constant spying has resulted in violence against women⁷⁶. The typical case people talked of involved the woman putting her phone down and leaving the room to do

⁷⁵ Porta dos Fundos, 2014. SENHA.

⁷⁶ Discussing the topic of domestic violence, Fonseca (2000: 69-85) recommends caution – as I translate – against forms of 'internal colonialism' in which 'any difference of values is seen negatively making even progressive agents to deny the notion of cultural alterity', indicating that Brazilian working class women 'have considerable power, in spite ideas about the relationships between

something else. The partner, who happens to be near, picks up the mobile before it automatically locks itself and looks at the conversations she is having. Ronaldo, a moto-taxi driver, told me about his sister-in-law being beaten by her partner as he thought that she was talking ‘intimacies’ [*intimidades*] with another man on WhatsApp. He confiscated her phone and kicked her out of the house. After she slept at Ronaldo’s home for a couple of weeks, the partner accepted her return and gave her the phone back.

Men can also be the target of spying. Luis, a 36-year-old evangelical Christian, was harshly confronted by Samanta, his step-daughter, because of a conversation he was having through WhatsApp. She found out – probably by spying on his mobile – that Luis was having ‘very friendly’ and continuous exchanges with this young and good looking sales representative from a motorcycle shop in Balduino. Samanta and Luis had a very emotional exchange through WhatsApp (as they did not want this situation to be known and gossiped about). He told me in his defence that the interaction with the sales rep was motivated by his efforts to evangelize and bring new people to their church, and went on to discredit his step-daughter, who ‘behaves saintly in the settlement but has a boyfriend in Salvador and spends full weekends there alone with him’.

4.2.6 Sharing passwords and social shaming on YouTube

Before ending this section about social media and infidelity, there are two unrelated phenomena worth noting: the popular practices of exchanging social media passwords with the partner and of recording and sharing videos of women fighting⁷⁷.

Evangelical Christians frequently share social media passwords as a sign of mutual trust and commitment to the relationship. In Balduino, this happens mainly between couples, but it can happen also as a family agreement (‘no secrets in the house’) or a demonstration of religious commitment between teenage individuals and their leaders in a church. The obvious intention is to allow the other person to access one’s private

spouses being different from those of the middle classes’.

⁷⁷ Soihet’s (1997) historical study depicts women in urban Brazil as having very different attributes for how the more affluent women were expected to behave. She writes that ‘Since their participation in the “world of work” was substantial, although kept in subaltern positions, popular women largely did not adapt to the characteristics given to women as universal: submission, modesty, delicacy, fragility. They were hard-working women, most of whom were not formally married, fought in the street, pronounced profanity, and [thus] escaped, on a large scale, the stereotypes attributed to the fragile sex.’

exchanges, so they can check the people they are chatting with as well as the conversations. As the practice disseminated outside the domains of evangelical Christian circles, some teenagers explain that such agreements can provoke a necessary preparation: the new couple first deletes conversations that took place before their relationship started and that should not be seen, as they are unrelated to the present romance. However, the overall perception about exchanging passwords is that it creates more problems than it resolves. Locals say that this will not keep a person who wants to cheat from seeking out other relationships, either by having more than one Facebook profile or by using other less popular platforms, such as Skype or texting, to flirt secretly. People can also have conversations on Facebook and immediately erase them. This arrangement creates tension between the couple as any friendly conversation can be interpreted as a discrete form of flirting.

Another topic relating to romance and social media that is common in the settlement concerns shared videos of women fighting. As chapter two shows, *indiretas* are an integral part of local ways to negotiate conflicts and thus are popular among social media users. The most common type of online *indireta* in Balduino happens between two women who are disputing one man. To speak indirectly in this case means that the post mentions the situation without referring to the name of the person being accused of involvement. Such conflicts eventually lead to physical confrontations, often in or near a school, and such events are videoed and then shared on social media.

There are pages and groups on Facebook dedicated to gathering and sharing this type of material, which combines violence and eroticism, as these fights often result in the participants removing items of clothing. For example, in a clip circulating on WhatsApp, three young women catch another girl, beat her violently, undress her completely and release her in the streets. Such videos not only record students participating in violent acts in or near their schools, but they also have shaming consequences like revenge porn. The student that is humiliated because of the beating is further humiliated with the video of the event circulating online. While the audience of the event increases, the file can stay perpetually available for re-circulation⁷⁸.

⁷⁸ Refers to explicit images or videos of a person posted on the Internet, typically by a former partner. See also: Sinanan, J., 2016. The Internet: Deviation — Cultural Anthropology. *Cultural Anthropology*. On this same topic, we are also reminded of boyd's (2010b) description of the

Such material raises tensions between parents (those whose children are beaten) and make the school vulnerable to administrative punishment for not safekeeping the wellbeing of students. At one point, such content circulating on social media became so common in the settlement that the headteacher of one of the schools announced to students that he would suspend anyone who uploaded or shared this type of video.

4.3 Parent-child relations

The literature about parenthood in low-income Brazil is broad given the importance of this topic in anthropology and the wealth of experiences researchers commonly find. See, for instance: Kitzinger, Bastos, Fernandes and Leitão (1996), Scavone (2001a, 2001b, 2013) about motherhood, Fonseca (2003) about gender and kinship, and Del Priore (1993) about women in colonial Brazil. As in other parts of Brazil (Fonseca 2002, 2006, 2009), until recently in Balduíno, pregnant women who did not want to keep a child would informally announce this in the settlement to find an adoptive mother. This other woman, often better off economically, could be childless, someone who did not have children of one specific sex, or just a person willing to raise the child. In Balduíno, the local adults I met who were foster children [*filho de criação*] often show pride and gratitude for their foster mothers and yet they also know who their blood mothers are and display some respect for them. Like 19th century cases of former slaves continuing with his or her masters as a servant in exchange for housing and subsistence (Falci 2004), low-income parents in my field site and in other parts of the country (Fonseca 2002b), offered their offspring as servants when they did not have the means to support the household and their children were not yet ready to work outside of the home. These children were ‘given’ to better off families for one year or more to be fed and eventually have the chance to go to school while learning how to work as a cleaner and cook (for girls), or as a general servant (for boys). Many of my adult female informants and some adult male informants had this experience sometime between 5 and 13 years old. Such topics, which have been well studied, are now at a stage of transition in the settlement as locals become more exposed to institutional rules and procedures.

affordances that emerge in what she called ‘networked publics’: persistence, replicability, scalability and searchability.

This brief introduction to the topic of parenthood and parent-child relations is to indicate that this is a complex issue and that, like the previous section about partners, the cases presented ahead are not easily expandable to all families living in the settlement, as the place itself is in a process of transformation, and the population includes people of different backgrounds. However, as a rough pattern, we can say that blood ties – though not in itself constituting family relations (Duarte and Campos Gomes 2008) – between mothers and offspring tended to be strong and long-lasting in opposition to precarious marital ties (Fonseca 1997).

In relation to social media, as in the case of Venkatraman's (2017) ethnography in South India, the opinion of parents varied according to the family's socioeconomic background. The more vulnerable families in Balduino tend to see their children's interest in technology positively as indication of a promising future working with computers. Some also talk about internet cafés as being safer places compared to the streets. On the other hand, the better-off and often (but not exclusively) evangelical Christian parents mention concern about their offspring having undesired conversations and could get in trouble as a result for developing secretive relationships. The consequence of this fear was that better off families made an investment purchasing computers and installing internet connections in their homes so that their use of social media would happen at home and under supervision.

4.3.1 Maternity, work and social media

Although matrifocality (Smith 1973; Blackwood 2005) is not broadly common in Brazilian low-income populations, research by Woortman (1987), Agier (1990) and Woortmann and Woortmann (2004) posit that certain groups in Bahia are close to this model. In Balduino, many of today's young people live only with their mothers or with their mothers together with a stepfather. Women's work in the region was traditionally in or around the settlement so that they could either carry their offspring with them while teaching them how to work or be close enough to home to monitor them. These women often also gathered in groups to collect shellfish, worked in the settlement's stores, and as the number of affluent visitors rose with the development of the region into a leisure destination for affluent urban families, they crossed the road to attend daily informal jobs cooking and cleaning for visitors on weekends.

In this context, it is relevant to note that more and more women are leaving their children behind for several hours, both on weekdays and weekends, to reap the benefits of regular formal employment⁷⁹. Women make up the majority of the stable low-income workforce in hotels and managers hold the position that, on the whole, women are more optimistic and try harder to keep their jobs more than men. Though while these jobs provide greater financial stability for the family, it is still the mothers' responsibility to look after the offspring. Mariana, at 22 years old, got a job at the region's prestigious five-star hotel resort and, in the initial months of working there, dreamed of receiving a prize given to the most dedicated employees. But then her two-year-old daughter fell ill and, because her partner does not consider child rearing his responsibility, she had to stay at home for nearly two months. Stressed with the situation and saddened by being away from her job, she also forgot to take her birth control pills and was pregnant with her second child at the time of writing.

To reduce the consequences of the lack of state infrastructure, some better paid parents employed outside of the settlement pay local adults to watch over their children when they are not at school during the day. Women who have more years of formal education are opening their homes to small groups of students who they look after and provide help with their homework after school. Digital technologies form part of the solution that these parents use. Offering internet, video game consoles and cable TV is a way to attract children and teenagers away from playing in the streets and to instead stay longer at home. Mobile telephony, social media, and particularly WhatsApp are intensely used by mothers to monitor their teenage sons and daughters while away from home. But this is not ideal, especially as older offspring also use the same social media to avoid the surveillance of adults.

4.3.2 A place parents don't control

Relationships between parents and offspring are one of the recurrent topics of this thesis. Chapter one refers to how adults are increasingly complaining about young people's lack of respect for older relatives. To many locals, a werewolf is not a mythical creature, but a real

⁷⁹ Legal guarantees regarding vacation, payment, and job security, access to bank service and credit, plus various benefits that companies offer to retain employees such as private health insurance to the worker's family.

person that was cursed because he beat his or her parents⁸⁰. According to teenagers, adults have been showing enthusiasm for social media particularly so that they can see what their offspring are doing there. However, though adults have been using Facebook and WhatsApp regularly in the past few years, young locals are not really worried about that because of the literacy gap between the current generation and that of their fathers, mothers, uncles and aunts. As chapter five describes, in the past couple of decades the number of years of schooling available in the settlement jumped from 4 to 12 and the number of students rose from only a few dozen to around two thousand. In this context, parents want to find out what their offspring do online and yet they are usually functionally illiterate and depend on their children to navigate computers and social media. Although they use the same platforms, one generation behaves completely differently online to the next. Locals who are younger than 30 years old tend to include writing in their everyday use of social media, while older adults have more restricted forms of participation: on Facebook they mostly share content, 'like' posts and add short comments such as 'kkkkkk' [LOL]. On WhatsApp, besides sharing visual content, they tend to either exchange audio messages or use it as a telephone.

Consequently, young people are much more worried about their peers being on social media than their parents. In chapter two, 16-year-old Margarete writes on public-facing social media about the romance that her mother is trying to find out about; she knows adults will not attempt to read long posts and only check for incriminating photos. It is Margarete that created her mother's Facebook account and helps her to set up the computer to use social media. In chapter five, Marina, an evangelical Christian, explains that one of the reasons that young people use social media is because parents are not there to control them. Although Marina would never risk being seen in the settlement talking to a person that belongs to an Afro-Brazilian religion, she felt at ease having such connections through social media.

As a final example to support this argument of how the online domain distances people of different generations: I once conducted a long interview with Debora, a 22-year-old university student, at her house. While her mother paid close attention to all our conversation (as she was unsure about my intentions), Debora explained to me in detail

⁸⁰ About the myth of werewolves in Brazil, see Câmara Cascudo (2015) and Dawsey (2006). Pillen (2016) relates these traditional violent characters and stories to experiences of trauma.

about her experiments in creating sophisticated fake Facebook accounts to then “friend” her foes in the settlements and find out about their ‘dirty secrets’ (i.e. who they were sleeping with). I asked her at the end, in front of her mother, if she thought her mother understood what she was saying. “Not at all”, she replied calmly, and the mother confirmed. The implications of a fake Facebook profile are not something that her 34-year-old illiterate mother would be aware of.

4.3.3 Social media, parenting and sexuality

There is one more concrete instance of conflict between some parents and their offspring in relation to social media and this is regarding teenagers using digital media to flirt and occasionally becoming pregnant consequently. The previous section of this chapter has already explained the importance locals give to using social media with the intention of having affairs or starting relationships. Social media is not changing this practice, only broadening the possibilities for secretive communication. But while partners tend to be about the same age (and similar literacy levels), this is not the case between parents and offspring, which means that parents tend to be in a disadvantageous situation to spy on their offspring using social media.

Teenage pregnancy is a topic commonly talked about among some adults. As chapter one explains, in general they point out ‘the lack of respect’ young people now show towards older relatives. However, a common theme during these conversations is the increasing number of teenagers trafficking and consuming drugs and, in association with this, the increasing number of young unmarried teenagers pregnant in the settlement. But these interactions often ignore or are silent about the fact that women in the region (as low-income women in the country) has traditionally had children in their teens and that also often these women begin to cohabit with partners after having two or more children. So as is the case in Balduino, today’s teenage mothers tend to be the daughters and granddaughters of women that started having children also during their teens.

Parents attempting to control their daughters’ secret romances are mainly evangelical Christians, but they face a difficult challenge. As we saw in chapter one, they tend to have higher literacy levels and consequently better computer skills, especially the younger parents. The greatest difficulty they face consists in watching out for the offspring while being away at work. Caught in the situation of having to leave their children behind

everyday, Lorenzo and his wife Nívea, both in the early 30s and active participants of the local Assembly of God, decided to sacrifice stable incomes as formal employees at hotels. Instead they rent a little store space in the settlement's commercial centre and offer services: he fixes mobiles and she is a seamstress. They explained that it was a necessary choice as they have two young daughters and want to be near them during the time they are not at school. Nevertheless, Lorenzo shared that they had recently learned that their 12-year-old had been speaking on her mobile secretly with an adult man she met online. The parents only found out because the daughter one day sent a text message mistakenly to Nívea. They apprehended her phone at night and when the person called at midnight, they answered it and threatened to take the matter to the police.

Lívia, a 14-year-old, was involved in an extreme example of the tensions happening inside some families. Her father José beat her violently after he discovered she had photographed and videoed herself naked to send this content to a lover – a practice known in English as “sexting”. José acted according to tradition, as educating through violence is not only acceptable but also perceived as a demonstration of one's parental concern. However, different from what is expected from an offspring, Lívia did not just confront José, hitting back and promising to ‘get evens’, she also screamed ‘I know my rights!’ The following week the situation became more complicated as she – apparently out of vengeance – accused him of sexually abusing her in the past. José was arrested but acquitted due to a lack of evidence. The situation in their house only improved over one month later when Lívia decided to move to another city to live with her mother.

Similar stories and anecdotes of offspring confronting parents circulate widely, mainly in daily conversations, not just in the settlement but among other low-income people I met. The most common versions of this situation have the offspring speaking to a policeman (representing the law, their “rights”) that lectures the offspring on how the law is much crueller than the parent. Ultimately, however, Lívia's sexting is a tragic case that resembles a broader phenomenon of rejection of family hierarchy (Sorrentino 2015) in the context of migration to cities in Brazil. Writing about youth criminality in a favela in São Paulo, Feltran (2011:171) refers to a case in which a young offender replies, when asked about the alternative of working: ‘why work? To be like my father? I'd rather die young.’

Teenage sex and pregnancies were common much before social media and continue to be common today with the help of social media, but not all parents are reacting the same

way about the topic. Márcia, a 33-year-old, used social media to play down the unexpected pregnancy of her 15-year-old daughter Carla, announcing it online as a celebration for her debut as a grandmother. In private, Márcia told me that ‘although [the arrival of] my granddaughter was unexpected for us, “a fright” [*um susto*], the important thing is that the baby is born healthy and that it’s a pregnancy, not a disease [her daughter has]. So, we have to keep moving.’

Márcia works as a temporary cleaner in the region, has a boyfriend that is not the father of her two daughters and though they consider themselves partners, they chose to not live together. After learning about the pregnancy of Carla, Márcia used WhatsApp to organize a baby shower. The group was opened during the 20 days before the date of the event and while Márcia constantly fed practical information (i.e. what size of nappies guests should purchase), other participants used it as a regular WhatsApp group (as discussed in chapter three and in the initial section of this chapter) to share great numbers of memes and videos, mostly about faith in God and sexual jokes for entertainment. After the birth of her granddaughter, Márcia sent through WhatsApp images of the child to her friends and family members.



Fig. 4.1: Selfie announcing pregnancy. It reads: “My little girl”.

4.3.4 Finding a middle ground

In Balduino, social media has helped teenagers more so than it has helped the teenagers' parents control them. Teenage pregnancies are not particularly uncommon also in evangelical Christian families – but I have also seen examples of social media becoming a tool evangelical teens and young adults use to maintain a middle ground between the excessive control from families and churches and local peer pressure to engage in premarital sexual relationships. With social media, these evangelical Christians could together build a sense of identity that included elements of the faith they embraced, but modernized and updated to move beyond the stereotypical idea of religious fanatic that only believes in what is written on the Bible.

One group of young adult females from the local Assembly of God who grew up together keep in touch and support each other during the intense years as university students. Together they resist the pressure from the church's minister himself, who insists that evangelical Christian women should dress respectfully wearing skirts and never trousers. They ignore him on this matter as wearing skirts to go to university reinforced prejudice from other students that evangelical Christians are close-minded, backwards and subservient to archaic values. During weekdays, Facebook and WhatsApp are key for these women to remain in continuous communication as they follow individual but equally intense schedules, including long daily bus trips to and from the city. Through this communication and when meeting on Sunday for activities, they also give each other support to resist against the attitude of the minister to invigilate people's social media. They say the minister is wrong to publicly shame teenagers from the church during services because of things he finds on their timelines online – generally girls posting photos of themselves wearing 'less respectful' clothing.

In short, this group of young adults used social media chat and Facebook timelines to present themselves both to conservative adults from their church and to their 'more liberated' non-evangelical peers elsewhere as achieving women that will have careers, are progressing in life, have interesting futures ahead, are acquiring sophisticated training and knowledge at their university courses and have loyal and supportive boyfriends that they plan to marry when the right time arrives.

4.4 Conclusion

The three sections in this chapter analyse the implications that social media brings to different forms of intimate relationships in relation to local tensions between individualism and collectivism. In the first two domains, the interest people have in using social media does not clearly challenge established norms and codes of behaviour. For example, the act of ‘friending’ on Facebook relates to traditional relationships ‘by sight’ [*de vista*]; locals use social media to communicate with others they are already close to offline, but when they add as online contacts those locals they know by sight, these new relationships in general do not evolve. Social media also exposes the importance that extended family relations still has for those who are of low-income. Facebook and WhatsApp groups become means for relatives to be in constant communication, despite the geographic dispersion that many decades of work migration has produced.

Social media is also not changing locals’ views on how couples relate. The evidence indicates the opposite happening: social media reflects people’s interest in flirting, having multiple relationships (in line with local traditions of matrifocality) and also to maintain their concern about infidelity. In this context, there are locals who are becoming less dependent on support networks and strengthening their nuclear family marital bonds. However, these changes relate to the expansion of evangelical Christianity, formal work positions and increasing government protection, not to the availability of social media.

Social media only appears to be challenging norms in regard to parent-child relations, but the change results also from broader processes including more active enforcement of laws that affect young people (e.g. the regulation of the age that minors can work) and the increasing number of mothers seeking work opportunities outside of the settlement, thus being less capable of monitoring their offspring during working hours. Although parents, and particularly mothers, use social media with the purpose of being in continuous contact with their offspring, it has the consequence of maintaining their participation in the gossiping and communication that nurtures support networks.

Margarete’s case in chapter two shows how the outcomes of incorporating social media either helps or at least does not prevent local low-income women from becoming pregnant during their teens – which, the literature presented indicates, is a traditional aspect of life among low income families in Brazil. Also, new communication channels young people now use more intensely – due to their more advanced levels of literacy – do

not represent a completely new concept in Balduino. Adults also talk about past experiences in 'lights off' spaces in the periphery of the settlement to which older relatives did not have access. Whether they use digital media or gather in less visible locations, youth retain the possibility of acting and having conversations outside of the reach of older relatives. Nonetheless, while earlier family connections tended to be stronger bonds than peer relations, social media appears to be enhancing the autonomy of young people in relation to family hierarchies. Adult married relatives remain important, but the local youth appear in general to be in a less subordinate position in relation to parents, grandparents and other older relatives.

A key aspect I discuss in this chapter is Fonseca's (2000:47-58) notion of sandwiched living, which applies to a predominant part of the low-income population in Balduino: those that are not the most vulnerable and marginalized and yet do not belong to a better schooled stratum of the working class. The description of sandwiched living presupposes that this social group establishes bonds not as a consequence of collective affinity or shared identity in opposition to other socioeconomic classes, but through continuous internal disputes as individuals maintain their access to support networks. Sandwiched living refers also to a tension regarding individualism and a sense of egalitarianism existing at the centre of these disputes among locals. I observed this internal social dynamic in Balduino, more generally in association with constant acts of conspicuous consumption, specifically in relation to digital technology and the uses of social media.

Considering the framework of sandwiched living and the lights on batch of images analysed in chapter 3, conspicuous consumption is not exclusively a means locals use to distinguish themselves from others; often it is a necessity one pursues to stay at the same level of others. Hence the pressure teenagers put on their parents to acquire branded items, newer smartphones and, as the following chapter describes, young people's shared anxiety regarding spelling and grammar mistakes when using social media. Again and again, the occurrence that would make people distinct from others often is simultaneously a common ground that most attempt to abide by. As Fonseca explains about sandwiched living, if the person exaggerates in his or her attempt to stand out, the risks of social ostracism increases. Yet she further explains that sandwiched living is not a closed system that bounds people from moving to different positions in society.

This chapter has mainly shown how social media has not significantly changed personal social relations in Balduino. The way that people use social media is broadly informed by forms of sociality that come from face-to-face interaction and following norms that reflect those that regulate relationships in families and inside broader networks of collaboration and help. Social media is popular because it provides a chance for people to go through the external processes of change and modernization while retaining many traditional social values. However, social media is not just being widely used; it is also posing new situations of conflict and opening opportunities of negotiation through alternative channels to communicate and form alliances. The argument is that the people of Balduino are using technology to be more like themselves, and yet technology is not a 'neutral agent'. As locals use social media, they are also reshaping their social relationships and values.

5

Education and work: tensions in class

Education is a common theme used to illustrate the advantages – but also the problems – that digital communication brings to society. Anthropologist Mizuko Ito's team of ethnographers analyse the consequences of social media for learning, indicating the existence of new possibilities for young people to develop their interests with like-minded peers (Ito et al 2009). boyd's (2014: 197) *It's complicated* critiques the shared perception that young people are 'digital natives' that will, using social media as a learning environment, 'eradicate inequalities'. Livingstone and Sefton-Green's (2016) extensive research of students in the United Kingdom addresses the debate of whether social media revolutionizes or poses a threat to education, and draws on original data to ponder about real problems parents are facing while recognizing the importance of giving offspring the autonomy to experience online sociality. Clark (2013) examines ethnographically the effects social media has on education in relation to social classes in the United States. She

concludes, following a Bourdieuan perspective, that social media furthers class divisions as it becomes an educational tool to the cosmopolitan and affluent and less so to the offspring of working class (or impoverished middle class) background. In Brazil, Scalco (2012:247) concluded that despite infrastructural limitations, her informants living in a low-income neighbourhood of a city found creative alternatives to access and use the digital domain, resulting in different forms of personal, family and group empowerment. But studying a different context, a rural impoverished settlement in the country's Northeast, Sorrentino (2015) reports that the increased exposure to media, including the Internet, of students results in 'side-effects' such as intensification of intergenerational conflicts and 'increasing internalization of subaltern status'.

Framed in a positive light, social media provides underprivileged populations such as those living in Balduino with access to information and knowledge that was previously confined to the socioeconomic elites. Echoing the findings of Clark, boyd, Scalco and Sorrentino, the cases presented below show that the consequences of digital communication in the settlement are not easily interpreted as deterministically improving or harming one's chances of prospering through education. As the comparative volume of *Why We Post* posits in relation to education, 'The best way to appreciate the impact of social media is to focus on specific sets of relationships: those between schoolchildren, between teachers and schoolchildren and between both of these groups and parents' (Miller et al. 2016:xii).

In Balduino, teachers tend to say that social media is a 'tragedy' that makes teaching and dealing with students more difficult. What they mean is that local schools are already behind when compared with the infrastructure and the higher quality staff available to the middle and upper classes through private institutions. Unlike the families of students of affluent backgrounds, parents and relatives in Balduino are mostly functionally illiterate and cannot assist their offspring with their homework. On top of these problems, teachers complain that students are now spending their free time and their classroom time monitoring conversations and interacting with peers through Facebook and WhatsApp. But pupils, and some of their parents, defend that social media is more effective than going to school when it comes to widening one's possibilities of finding better paying work.

To address these complex issues, it is important to see how schooling has evolved in Balduino. By all possible measures, students today have much better educational

conditions than their parents had: the number of years of mandatory education available in the settlement went from 4 to 12 between the 1980s and the 1990s, and while many families in the past forbade their offspring from going to school, today literally every child attends classes and are given the necessary resources to study. But despite these concrete signs of improvement, in general students are not interested in formal education and many finish high school only because a diploma increases their chances of competing for similar low-income manual jobs that their parents have⁸¹. And yet, while teachers are right to say that schools have become 'facebooked' (meaning: a meeting ground for young people to socialise when they are not on social media), the ethnography shows that digital communication improves locals' literacy and is often used as a source of information to deal with everyday issues. Furthermore, social media has also become instrumental for people – especially women – to pursue formal work or university degrees, which demand that they leave their homes and spend part of their days away from their local networks of support.

This chapter is based on a variety of case studies including ones about teenagers who are still in high school, young people starting their professional lives, and adults who left school years ago. Some of the stories are of people who, like many in the settlement, are not particularly convinced of the advantages of formal education. We will also examine instances of locals who have made strenuous efforts to go to university. The perspectives of men are important because they are in general more resistant to formal arrangements including employment that demand submission to schedules and bosses. But the views of women are also relevant as traditionally in the region they have been responsible for homes and raising offspring, and the prospect of formal employment has shifted their priorities to delay their family plans and invest more time studying and building a career – though this is easier said than done. Finally, we also consider how evangelical Christians are using social media to further their educational and professional aims. Throughout this thesis, evangelical Christianity is constantly associated with literacy and aspiration. Not surprisingly, a significant number of local university students are Protestant or have Protestant parents. Having to spend long hours commuting every day, these students count on social media to coordinate their classroom activities, but the online domain is also used

⁸¹ During fieldwork I conducted an informal survey among male teenagers and young adults asking them what they would prefer to have: a high-school diploma or a motorcycle. The large majority picked the second option without hesitation.

to achieve cosmopolitanism as they cultivate relationships outside of established religious boundaries.

5.1 The consequences of social media on schooling

5.1.1 Schooling in the settlement

Like in other nearby settlements, Balduíno has had a public school since the first half of the 20th century, but these institutions offered very limited services. The school building in the 1980s had four classrooms and its teachers (always female) either moved from Salvador to take the position or were the educated daughters of distinguished local men (property and shop owners). Classrooms had few material resources, students were often barefoot wearing old used clothes, and teaching methods included routine physical punishment using spanking paddles⁸². While now the state has strengthened the incentives for underprivileged children to be sent to school, until the late 1980s and early 1990s, many parents preferred for their offspring to be available to work and to help at home. The children who could take this four-year programme were taught to read and write, studied basic maths, sciences, and history and were lectured on a mandatory discipline called 'education, moral and civic'. However, the difficulties these adults have today to read, write and perform basic calculations suggests that they ended their schooling as functionally illiterate⁸³.

About 30% of Brazilians were functionally illiterate in 2015⁸⁴, a number that is certainly higher in low-income localities like Balduíno, but locals did not see this a problem considering their work prospects. During pre-teenage years, men often went on to help other male relatives (builder, fishermen, some traders), while girls assisted their mothers at home, helping to raise younger siblings and participating in productive group activities in the locality.

Ricardo, a geography teacher, is one of the few people of his age (late 30s) in Balduíno with a university degree. His family owned a small shop in the locality, but their

⁸² The paddles were applied by the teacher in case of misbehaviour or by students themselves during regular one-on-one challenges about the content being taught. In these competitions, two students faced each other, asked questions about a taught subject and were hit on the hand by the opponent if they did not answer correctly. Though clearly painful, the adults I spoke with about these experiences talked about them with excitement, as though they were simply a game.

⁸³ Fonseca (2000: 49-58) provides a detailed analysis of the literature on topics related to non-literate societies and particularly illiteracy in relation to low-income Brazilians.

⁸⁴ See Nexô Jornal, 2016. A evolução do analfabetismo funcional no Brasil.

business did not provide them with a better lifestyle than the families of fishermen and builders at the time. So, Ricardo grew up as a local boy doing what all others of his age did: fish, steal fruits and little animals for fun, play football, help at home, and go with peers to festivities in neighbouring settlements. Ricardo's father, however, had more formal education than most people in the settlement. Born in Salvador, he read newspapers, could write letters and notes, and perform algebra calculations common to a salesman. Ricardo says that it was to honour and to impress his father that he decided to step away from the everyday routines of other children to carry on studying.

Supporting Ricardo's continuation in school from the age of 11 (his 5th school year) was expensive for his family's income level. There were different costs involved in keeping him studying. Because he was away or doing homework during the day, he was not around to help with the shop. They also had to pay his daily transportation to and from school which was 30 kilometres away, and purchase books, notebooks and the other necessary material. Seven years later, he was finally accepted at a free public university in Salvador, but his financial hurdles continued. Due to a lack of money, during a long period of his 4-year course he had to secretly spend nights in the student common room (after everyone else had left at 11 pm), eat one meal a day consisting of bread and butter, and only go home on weekends.

But together with his family's economic limitations, there were other conditions influencing Ricardo's decision to study. Kuznesof's (1998) study argues that low-income families in Brazil historically preferred their offspring to learn in the practical and moral sense through beginning to work at early age. This perception appears on today's intergenerational tension that is constantly discussed in Balduino. Fonseca (2008:144-145) explains that her low-income informants often attribute a great prestige to formal education, however, their practical understanding is that taking their offspring to school will make little impact on their prospects in life.

Ricardo's household were supportive of him studying, but most families then and many now consider going to school as a luxury that encourages laziness and disrespectful behaviour. Ricardo recalls his weekly visits to the settlement as stressful moments because, as he explains, his peers were at the time beginning to make a little money (e.g. catching and selling fish and lobster to affluent visitors or working as builders) and they could purchase new clothes, shoes, and very importantly, engage in romance and buy gifts for

girlfriends. From this time, he remembers bitterly one girl who ‘dumped’ him because she – similarly to everyone else – could not see the purpose of studying when there was easier money to be made without leaving the settlement. Because of his insistence in pursuing a university degree, he was also commonly treated as arrogant, which was apparent in the way his peers would ironically comment things such as: ‘no, Ricardo, you won’t like this music. You only like music from the city now.’

Only one generation later and the Coconut Coast is now a different place when it comes to schooling. Instead of the four-year basic programme, today the settlement has two schools that offer ‘fundamental education’ (years 1 to 9) and one ‘middle education’ (years 10 to 12 - high school) of compulsory schooling⁸⁵. The number of students in the settlement, who used to be a few dozen when Ricardo started studying, is now over two thousand. Elementary schools, which are in better shape, have buildings that include proper administration offices, a staff room, telephones, internet-connected computers (used by staff members only, though students often find out the password), toilets, an industrial kitchen to cook meals for students and staff, areas for students to hang out while outside of classrooms and, in one of them, a sports’ court. On top of that, now all students receive free of cost from the municipal and state governments everything needed to go to class: uniforms, transportation to and from the student’s home, textbooks and other classroom material, plus extracurricular activities to help students who have academic difficulties.

However, the presence of this infrastructure is not all that counts for families to embrace formal education programmes. The following case presents some of the difficulties local students face as they attempt to move away from traditional gender roles through education and work.

5.1.2 ‘I lived on a different planet’

When Maria was growing up, she accepted various invitations from evangelical Christian school mates to visit their churches. She out tried several and spent longer periods of time attending services in some of them, but, like other locals, during her teenage years she gradually lost interest in spending time in church activities and explains that she grew

⁸⁵ Balduino also has a private school that, until recently, provided 12 years of compulsory schooling, but now it only has students for years 1 to 9.

progressively disappointed with 'the hypocrisy' of evangelical Christians: 'they talk much about God, but what really matters for them is money'. However, although Maria now rejects this form of Christianity, her choices concerning work as an adult look like the path that evangelical Christian women more often take in terms of delaying motherhood to focus on their careers and look for better paying jobs that offer stability.

At 22 years old, Maria works as a bartender at one of the region's upscale tourist resorts. Although this is a relatively less prestigious job in these businesses (seen as being more 'manual' compared with being at the reception or at an office), it has been a tough journey for her to arrive there. As she explained, during most of her teenage years she 'lived on a different planet', but relationships she had at school with other female students of similar background made her realise there were new paths for women to follow in the region. Her peers talked excitedly about taking short-term professional courses in Camaçari city to enhance their employment possibilities. Attuned with the various professional opportunities opened to low-income workers in that region, these programmes provide short and relatively less expensive instructions in subjects such as Excel, general office management, Autocad, and a basic introduction to using computers. Maria decided to move in the same direction. But Maria's family, particularly her mother, did not agree with this choice. For them it had already been unsettling that she, being a woman, finished high school while her older brother did not. In their view, her priority should be becoming a mother and caring for her home (cleaning, cooking and raising her children). She should be employed only informally at a shop in the settlement to help with the income of the home.

Family resistance towards Maria's desire to follow a different path has had two consequences: to put distance between Maria and her mother to the extent that they barely talk, and to make Maria more resolute to pursue her professional project. Following the steps of many others of similar age and background in Balduino, she signed up for the '*Jovem Aprendiz*' (Young Apprentice Programme), a training scheme paid for by the region's large hotels. At these courses, 'apprentices' have classes on practices, norms, and etiquette related working in the leisure industry. They learn, among other things, notions of hygiene necessary to work in industrial kitchens, how to interact with clients, and how to use standard spoken Portuguese. Together with the classroom activities, the scheme provides temporary employment to young locals to acquire work experience and, after the 'trainee period' ends, some are selected to be formally hired based on their performance.

Given the difficult relationship Maria has with her mother, she eventually decided to move in with her long-term boyfriend. She says that it is now too late for her to go to university considering her income limitations and age, but she views her current work status as being a step ahead from the type of subordinate ('locked-up-at-home') life that women like her mother have had to accept. Having a formal job gives Maria a sense of independence and autonomy, as her wage, career perspectives and benefits are like those of her partner. However, like other professional adult women in Balduino, when she arrives back home, she is still responsible for cooking, cleaning and – after bearing children – looking after them.

Like almost every one of her age group, Maria is at ease with social media, but being online was not as important as being at school in terms of broadening her career prospects. She took a step in a new direction after seeing other local girls sharing their enthusiasm about new work opportunities. But using social media has been important for consolidating this transition from 'locked-up-at-home' to formal employment away from the settlement. Though Maria managed to overcome the resistance from her family and was successful at pursuing formal employment, the mobile phone and then WhatsApp became instrumental for her to be able to endure this new experience. These are the technologies she uses more intensely now as they allow her to remain part of her networks of solidarity by keeping in touch with close friends and family members. She is also able to support them and participate in the circulation of gossip that, as chapter four explained, is an important part of her life.

So far we have seen the transformation that has taken place in Balduino since the time Ricardo, during the 1990s, decided to pursue a university degree. Schools have improved considerably, so people like Maria have all the resources necessary to finish twelve years of compulsory education. Maria has been using social media since her teens, as other locals have, through internet cafés, however, when she talks about the experience that changed her professional path, she does not mention social media or her teachers. In her story, she talks about feeling encouraged to pursue a different career because of relationships she had with peers. So before examining the effects of social media on learning and education, it is useful now to briefly examine why teachers are not particularly mentioned when local students talk about their education and careers.

5.1.3 Better schools, new problems

When the settlement had only one school with four classes, parents were accepting of, and often encouraged, teachers physically disciplining their offspring. Until the early 1990s, the spanking paddle was just as much a part of the teaching toolkit in local classrooms as the blackboard. But now things have changed. Students have better facilities, more teachers, do not have to travel to finish compulsory education and receive all necessary material for schooling free from the government. But problems between students and teachers and more broadly between locals and local schools are rising in the settlement.

One of the basic issues with local schools has to do with many teachers being strangers to the settlement. Local schools prefer to hire people from the region, but there aren't enough qualified teachers living there to take these positions. Most teaching staff therefore commute daily from the city and this creates new anxieties. Some parents and relatives complain about the high rate of absences among teachers, which happens for a range of reasons including lack of motivation and problems with commuting. This recurrent situation means that students are often unsupervised during class and thus more likely to get themselves into trouble with drugs and unintended pregnancies etc. However, another reason for parents' complaints is that they fear what these teachers can do to their children. The private lives of teachers who are not living in the settlement are beyond the reach of the local networks of gossip, so parents often worry that some of these strangers are paedophiles and sexual predators⁸⁶.

The tensions between staff and students also increase because schools are overcrowded. Local principals are obliged to accept anyone in the age of compulsory education and the consequences are that spaces initially planned to be libraries or computer rooms become classes. The books and computers that these institutions receive are often locked up or piled up in various locations within the school. The growing number of students reflects the effects of two economic-related factors. One factor is that more vulnerable families now benefit from certain welfare schemes under the condition that their offspring are registered and attend school regularly (Soares and Sátyro 2009). The other circumstance is that, with the expansion of the formal job market in the region, parents and increasingly mothers are taking advantage of these opportunities to work and

⁸⁶ During the ethnography, I heard informally of one case of a male high school teacher that allegedly had seduced male students.

make money, but having to deal with the criticism of 'leaving children behind' and concerns about drug addiction and crime, they see schools as places that will take care of their offspring during at least half of the day. These two new situations are important for understanding the increase in the number of students.

But while these families send their children to school, they are not necessarily interested in pushing them to study. They may lack the knowledge to assist their sons and daughters with lessons in maths or biology, but they also are often sceptical about the advantages that 'having an education' can bring to their offspring. To the most vulnerable local families, for instance, the amount of time young people spend in internet cafes using social media represents a clearer indication of a promising career, rather than going to school. Venkatraman's (2017) study in Chennai, India, another researcher of the *Why We Post* project, also found that while more affluent families tended to see social media as a problem that affected the educational results, the more vulnerable saw using social media positively as an indication of their offspring's chances of having better paying jobs. In more vulnerable households, knowing how to use a computer looks more like something that could help young people to make money. Many parents that oblige their offspring to attend classes do not stimulate or motivate them to do their homework or to study for tests, which makes the work of teachers more difficult and frustrating. Therefore, teachers not only have to look after a growing number of students, they also in general are the only ones who are concerned about educating these young people.

It is not only a matter of students having academic limitations, but that they are often not interested in studying. I experienced this first-hand when, during fieldwork, I took care of a class of around 30 seventh graders (aged about 13 years old) for two consecutive 50-minute classes. I was having a conversation with the head teacher when an assistant arrived to say one of the teachers would not arrive for class that day. he asked if I would be interested in seeing how it is like to deal with students there. Since I only had to make sure they stayed in class and behaved, I proposed to the class that we spent the time having a conversation about things they were interested in like WhatsApp or gaming. After several attempts, the only activity that kept them somewhat busy and quiet was dictation. Otherwise, most were both agitated and having fun undermining my attempts to interact with them. As the following case argues, many young people may want to finish high school, but the idea of learning has little to do with this choice.

5.1.4 A high school diploma to be '*tranquilo*'

23-year-old Diego had both parents at home when he grew up and lives a comfortable life in comparison to most in the settlement. His family home, located at a premium spot near the main street, has a DVD player, an X-Box game console, a laptop with broadband service, and a 25-inch flat screen TV that receives cable TV programming including the more expensive movie channels. Part of this high-tech environment results from Diego's fascination with technology. He is the family nerd. His father, an illiterate fisherman, speaks very proudly of how Diego helps him to access online information about weather conditions before he sets sail. Diego is also constantly asked to resolve issues related to smartphones and computers, not only for his family but also for his friends and neighbours. Most of these issues include uploading files to a phone, downloading and installing apps or changing the settings of equipment. When it comes to more challenging problems, he resolves them using Google, studying threads of exchanges on forums, watching YouTube videos, and talking to other friends that are equally into what Ito et al. (2009) called 'messaging around and geeking out' with digital equipment.

Diego says his parents did not push him to do well at school, and that his only aim with finishing high school was to take advantage of the symbolic value this diploma carries in the region's leisure job market. Five years ago, when he joined the staff of waiters of the high-level tourist resort, he was not just the youngest in a large team (waiters at this hotel attend guests in four restaurants and eight swimming pools), but he was also the only one holding a high school diploma. Given the lack of local workers with better literacy, hotels must transport employees back and forth from Salvador, even including those who work in positions that do not need specific training or accreditation beyond reading and writing such as waiters or watchmen. So these businesses appreciate a candidate for a low-wage position who has been affected during 12 years by the 'normalizing power' (Fonseca 2000:47) of schools. Diego, seeing this potential, now has benefits that include health and dental private insurance and food stamps [*vale refeição*] that his family can use at supermarkets.

Despite having the curiosity and talent to deal with electronic equipment, Diego did not want to have another three or four years of education in a university or doing professional technical courses to become an independent technician or an IT person at a

local business. Another option for him was to be trained with his father and eventually take over his boat – an expensive item – and still make good money as a fisherman and taking tourists on fishing trips. Instead, at 17 years old, Diego began working as assistant waiter at a hotel resort. He acknowledges that if it wasn't for the Internet, he would be a '*tabareu*' [hick, ignorant]. However, his plans consist of having money to 'afford his bills' [*pagar as contas*], to go out with his friends, and to play his beloved video games. He wants to be '*tranquilo*' [at ease] with regular working days and hours, have good benefits, and enjoy the safety of getting paid at the end of the month.

Cases like Maria's and Diego's represent the ambitions of many local young people. They see formal employment as advantageous to increase their consumption of goods (especially the ones they see on TV), to have legal protection as workers (less chance of being fired), and to have access to private health care. They are not among the more vulnerable groups in the settlement who consider formal employment to be '*modern day slavery*', thus preferring to work autonomously as builders or as a motorcycle taxi. To Diego and Maria, the important thing is to be assured that their payment will be available to them at the end of the month.

In the following section, we will consider what is keeping young people like them from also taking advantage of formal education. As things stand today, the school is mostly a hurdle one needs to pass to reach formal employment.

5.1.5 Class separations

Collins (2009) draws on research produced over the last 40 years (Coleman 1966, Jencks & Phillips 1998, Kingston 2000, Lemke 2002) conducted in the United States and internationally to argue that it remains a problem in the social sciences to understand how social inequality results from the relationships between schools, classrooms and society. These studies indicate, as Clark's (2013) did in relation to the use of digital media and Bourdieu (Swartz 1977) and Willis (1977) about school systems, that socioeconomic status matters more than the school to influence child's educational (and later professional) achievements. In this section, I have aimed to contribute to this debate by providing an ethnographic description and analysis of class tensions that similarly exist in my field site in schools, between students and teachers, and in work domains, between employees and their bosses.

In Balduíno, the lack of discipline in school and constant challenges to the staff's authority is mainly visible in the form of a generalized rejection of the mandatory uniform (shirt with school logo and blue denim trousers). Instead, students arrive to class wearing part of the uniform together with a variety of other items (usually associated with hip-hop culture) such as expensive caps, thick golden necklaces and earrings, branded sandals or tennis shoes, mini-skirts, colourful shirts and bermuda shorts. This aspect of school life has become such a difficult problem to deal with that in one of the schools the principal now sits at the entrance gate every day before class starts to personally inspect each of the pupils 'because they will not obey anyone else.'

This growing 'insubordination' relates to the lack of concern some families show towards formal education and the previously noted problem regarding teachers coming from outside the community. However, the ethnography indicates that this confrontation of authority is also the result of a social class issue. While part of the younger population is more open to the constraints and advantages of formal work, work relations in general are a sensitive issue. The uneasiness felt in classrooms appears like that experienced by local adult employees that are also commonly insubordinate in work relations. They express their unease in a variety of ways such as by openly rejecting any type of subordinate employment, collectively or individually boycotting bosses, choosing temporary jobs instead of formal contracts, or accepting formal employment temporarily only to force a situation to be fired and collect unemployment benefits. Like Diego's father, other adults often talk about formal work as being modern-day slavery.

This type of resistance against formal work relations by low-income groups has been previously analysed as being a strategy of self-preservation. According to Fonseca (2000:12), 'the contempt [for employment] can be interpreted as self-defence, since many [...] have at some point been brutally dismissed by a potential boss'. The argument is that the individuals belonging to the more marginalized (often referred as sub-proletarian) strata in Brazil are constantly being shown that the best work available to untrained manual labour constantly depends on 'good appearance', a criterion that refers to having a certain taste (shown in the choice of clothing and hairstyle⁸⁷) and on skin colour. Those coming from underprivileged rural backgrounds (usually of African descent and with little

⁸⁷ An informant explained that in the region, a person of African ancestry will not pass a job interview to an office position if they have an Afro hairstyle.

or no schooling) learn that the only regular employment that they can aspire to in cities is that in which they need to 'break their backs' serving younger and less experienced affluent bosses who will often use their position and social class to justify abusive behaviour. So, they prefer ways of making money that are independent and informal. In Balduino this translates to a range of informal activities such as driving a moto-taxi, which is a popular profession among the young, being an independent builder, a fisherman and selling products on the streets, among other alternatives.

Like managers in work environments, teachers often come from urban backgrounds and get impatient when students of rural family background – as Fonseca (2008) also reports – do not follow academic programmes that reflect middle class values. Like their parents in work situations, young locals are constantly made aware at school of their inferior socioeconomic status because they are 'hopelessly ignorant'. If in work environments employers talk openly about how their employees (some of whom may be nearby) cannot be trusted and are dirty and lazy, tragically in schools, teachers similarly talk about the 'serious deficiencies' that their students face and point to how many 'have been in school for five years or more but can barely read and write'. This identification of teachers with employers adds to the various other factors that complicate the marginal position school has in young people's lives.

As chapter one shows, parents and other adult family members are themselves often critical of 'today's young people's lack of respect', which is expressed in the form of a lack of discipline, materialism, and what they perceive as an aversion to hard work. But instead of supporting schools to put pressure on young people to behave, when it comes to problems that their children have in such institutions, they become their children's advocate against what they consider to be 'discrimination', 'harassment', and 'unfair treatment'. While at work they understand themselves as being the ones with the least institutional power, when it comes to school the relationship changes and they are acting as clients of a service, so they feel more at ease to complain.

Finally, while parents act to defend their offspring, schools in the settlement are also increasingly becoming part of the territory controlled by drug gangs. The regular absence of teachers means that students are constantly hanging out outside of classrooms or in the areas next to schools, but situations related to drug consumption and trafficking also happen in the daytime, during normal working hours and while teachers are in class. I

was present at a local school when a teacher arrived nervously in the staff common room saying that three girls (ages between 11 to 12) had just been taking cocaine during his class. He did not see it happening because they were behind other students, but after the class dispersed another student reported it to him. Facing such pressures, the principal of the largest local school went from classroom to classroom announcing to students he was giving up his 'sovereignty' inside school grounds and bringing the police inside to deal with the events and matters that he and his staff saw as being beyond their scope and responsibility.

5.1.6 How the school staff sees social media

The background presented in the previous section is necessary to then consider where local school staff are coming from when they talk about social media, which is mainly associated with a lack of discipline. As other studies in Brazil (Santos Abreu and Nicolaci-da-Costa 2003, Medeiros and Ventura 2008, Santos 2011a, Santos 2011b) have pointed out, teachers are receiving incentives to buy and use computers, but in general they are not as comfortable with the challenges that digital communication bring to their work. In Balduino, their view often involves a separation of the Internet between the good and the bad. In their reasoning, using the internet can potentially provide an invaluable advantage to students lacking favourable material conditions and family support for studying and consequently could open a path to better opportunities and socio-economic evolution. The best representation they have of the 'good internet' is Google, which they refer to as an online library with all sorts of useful educational content that local students can now access. But despite this unprecedented variety of resources being available to them through the 'good internet', students choose to indulge in the 'bad internet' represented by social media.

As one principal explained, social media consumes the little attention these students once devoted to classroom work. Her perspective is that before internet-connected mobiles, the school was first a place that provided formal education and – only as a secondary unimportant outcome – a place where students got together and socialised before and after class. But now the order of priorities is the opposite. She explains that it is not just a matter of using mobiles during class, but of how students are now continuously interacting with each other also while they are away. 'They talk, and talk, and talk using their phones while

they apart. Then they meet at school and the conversation goes on! I really do not understand what subjects are sucking their attention this way,' she says sounding frustrated but resigned. Her conclusion about this recent and evolving scenario is that local schools have been 'facebooked' to exist as a space for daily social gathering of young people to expand conversations circulating through Facebook and WhatsApp.

Though this argument is not new and echoes the perceptions of parents and teachers in different parts of the world (Costa 2016, McDonald 2016, Venkatraman 2017, Miller 2016:220), it needs to be relativised and contextualised to the reality of the Coconut Coast. The distanced position of teachers and school staff in the settlement is mainly responsible for their pessimistic perspective of social media. They blame social media for the failings of a poor educational system. As other ethnographies from the *Why We Post* project have shown, social media is many different things with different consequences, some of which are forms of formal and informal learning⁸⁸. Locals say that they are better informed of things happening outside the settlement as a consequence of using social media, and young people refer to it as something that has broadened their personal experiences drastically in relation to the limitations of their older relatives. A teenager said that without the Internet he would be a 'vegetable'. This contrasts with the generally pessimistic perspectives that teachers espouse about digital communication.

The following pages describe – contrary to what the teachers say – how the constant use of social media can help teenagers and young adults to learn and particularly to improve their literacy skills, thus making university education and professional diplomas more realistic for the new generation living in Balduino.

5.2 Social media and learning

5.2.1 Social media as schooling

Belloni and Gomes (2008) have argued that social media encourages children to learn autonomously and to collaborate. Outside of the school domain in Balduino, social media has become a rich source of information and knowledge. For teens and for interested adults there, Google and especially YouTube represent a repository of information about practical things that they want to learn. YouTube mainly – but also specialised forums – provide

⁸⁸ See Miller et al. (2016) chapters on education, work and inequality.

information about even highly complex procedures. For example, I saw teenagers at an internet café looking up videos to teach them how to install a small hardware item called Gevey that they had successfully imported from China. At the time, Gevey was a solution to bypass technical locks that prevented an iPhone 4 which was originally used in Europe to be unlocked to operate in other regions. But this is not an exceptional case of learning happening with the help of digital resources. YouTube, which is often described more abstractly as an online video platform, is used routinely as a source of tutorials for different demands⁸⁹. Locals use it often inside social media to share video content, but they also use it independently when it comes to resolving practical matters, as in the following situations.



Fig. 5.1: Local learning how to fix a car engine using YouTube.

Fernando, a 38-year-old functionally illiterate builder, wanted his children to be able to access the Internet at home, but they live in a squatting area. Because the electricity they use is illegally channelled to the constantly varying number of houses in that area, Fernando and his teenage son went to the Internet café to learn how to install a certain brand and model of a no-break system to protect the family computer against electricity

⁸⁹ For more on YouTube and learning: Snickars and Vonderau (2009), Spyer (2011) and Wesch's (2008) *An anthropological introduction to YouTube*.

fluctuations. YouTube is crucial for them because they can see and hear the instructions instead of having to read and follow diagrams.

After being able to safely turn on the computer, a friend of Fernando offered him free access to broadband. This friend wanted to test a recent experiment he made to install an antenna at home together with equipment to broadcast his broadband signal through radio so he could provide a paid service to squatters interested in having home internet connection.

The Internet is also a source of other kinds of information and knowledge, and is used to fulfil needs that relate to the weak government services available in the settlement.

Luciana, a 35-year-old mother of three, uses both Facebook and YouTube intensely to learn. Her family moved to Balduino from Salvador in the 1970s running away from the growing violence in the city's favelas. She worked as a daily cleaner for affluent families but since she had a nervous breakdown⁹⁰ ten years ago – when a nephew was murdered while serving a jail sentence – she struggles to find regular employment due to her low confidence and unstable emotional state. Though she has the support of her family (most brothers and sisters live in various houses in the same street), Luciana and her partner have scant resources to get by. He does odd jobs as a cropper and she mostly stays at home. But he managed to barter for an old computer in exchange for a plot of land he had acquired years earlier at an abandoned farm, and they also sublet the broadband connection from a neighbour. Since then they have been intensely using this new opportunity for communication.

Luciana has specific health demands that the health facility in Balduino cannot accommodate. Different from schools, which have evolved considerably in the last two decades, local health services remain precarious. Aside from the generalised lack of motivation of nurses and other employees, general practitioners are available only on certain days and hours and people must queue for hours in the morning to schedule an appointment. Luciana's mental condition is currently stable, but she cannot schedule to see a specialist in the settlement. So, when the circumstances demand, she asks friends or family members to accompany her during the long commute by bus to and from the

⁹⁰ About mental health in low-income Brazil see, for example: Duarte (1988, 2003), Fonseca (1999) and Silveira (2000).

county's public hospital. But now access to the Internet allows her to get information without having to make such strenuous effort.

Being a long time evangelical Christian, Luciana reads and writes better than the average person. So, to her and other literate adults, as Scalco (2012:246) also reported, Google has become a sort of 'house doctor'. YouTube is useful for specific and often practical situations such as those described previously, but it is not as useful when it comes to medical issues. Luciana accesses it constantly to find information such as the possible diagnosis of a group of symptoms or checking whether certain conditions she experiences can be side-effects of medicines. This type of information is abundantly available in textual format online and Luciana is becoming increasingly experienced in making these searches; but self-diagnosis and self-prescription of medicines causes new complications for her and other locals.

Social media is also part of the strategy Luciana created to earn money when she does not feel confident to leave her home. She searches on YouTube for video tutorials showing how to make party food and subscribes to different Facebook pages that specialise in cooking tutorials. She gathers these recipes and is now making a little money cooking and selling food for birthday parties, weddings and other celebrations. Luciana also photographs and uploads the results of the various orders she cooks as means of advertising her activity.

Besides the uses of social media described so far, the following section will argue that social media has made reading and writing part of the everyday practices of young people.

5.2.2 Spellchecking and the public display of literacy

Until the popularisation of social media and except for evangelical Christians, people in Balduino were not interested in reading and did not practice writing. The perception most had in the settlement until the recent past was that (as Ricardo's case shows) studying was a waste of time. Mr. Ulisses, an octogenarian, still remembers bitterly the explanation his father gave to forbid Mr. Ulisses to attend school: 'the literate gets by, and the illiterate gets by just the same'. This little regard for literacy appears, for example, in the local library, which is indefinitely closed, and with the general lack of interest for consuming printed media. The only places that sell newspapers and magazines there are the local pharmacies,

as these are businesses that affluent travellers stop by as they enter the settlement to shop for provisions on their way to other locations.



Fig. 5.2: Local using social media outside from home.

Social media changed this disregard for textual communication particularly in relation to young people, because literacy combined with online communication opens a social domain that adults in general cannot reach – as chapter four explained. Since internet cafes began to operate in the late 2000s, reading and writing moved from being a knowledge taught and used only in classrooms to becoming something cool that expanded their possibilities for social interaction (as also described in Griswold, McDonnell, and Wright 2005) and exchange of content. As inexpensive smartphones have flourished among young people since late 2013, an inversion has taken place: before this, they rarely practiced reading and writing and now, reading and writing has become just about the only

thing that they do continuously – at home, when out with friends, at school, and especially during long bus commutes. The change has impacted, for instance, family relationships as illiterate parents and other adults have suddenly found themselves socially isolated and alone as their offspring and younger relatives devote hours to conversations through social media. As older relatives have reacted to their family's attention being drawn to social media, young people record and share these situations using their phones, circulating them nationally among low-income online networks as in the following videos⁹¹.

Social media is not just a place for practicing literacy skills. Part of the improvement in writing results from locals becoming more aware of their poor literacy and the public nature of their resulting embarrassment. Now everyone else can see their mistakes on the posts they upload to Facebook or on WhatsApp exchanges. As they began using social media, the more learned used writing to display achievement (like wearing branded clothes) and the least literate must be aware of what they post to avoid being publicly ridiculed. Barlett's (2007) study of literacy and shame coincide with the stories of several of my adult informants, who mention intra-class episodes of symbolic violence. Michelle, whose case appears later this chapter, recalls as a highly traumatic experience that, arriving in Salvador to work as temporary cleaner, other young women of similar background repeatedly bullied her by exchanging among themselves written notes that Michelle could not understand. In relation to this practice on social media, a phrase occasionally seen on Facebook comments among young people was: 'You think so much of yourself and yet you cannot even write correctly!'

In a nutshell, young people found themselves trapped between having to participate in social media exchanges, but at the same time having to worry about the accuracy of their written language. They could not hide themselves by sticking with simple practices such as sharing or 'liking' because this is what their parents and older relatives would do (see chapter four). Because they are identifying themselves in contrast with previous generations through digital technology, they need to use it more capably and proficiently, including writing posts. Teachers in the settlement, themselves in general less

⁹¹ See: *Why We Post*, 2016. Northeast Brazil: The plague of WhatsApp for Brazilian parents. *YouTube*. *Why We Post*, 2016. *Why We Post*, 2016. Northeast Brazil: Technology and generational differences - THE VIRUS. *Why We Post*, 2016. Northeast Brazil: Technology and generational differences - INSTAGRAM.

knowledgeable about social media than their students, apparently disregard the anxiety that using social media brings to young locals, and yet based on 15 months living in the settlement, the one common experience all young people in Balduino had was the fear of writing incorrectly on social media and being subjected to public shaming.

This context – of having the pressure to write correctly to be respected on social media – led locals to embrace all possible technological solutions within reach to improve their writing. Some have spell-checking apps on their mobiles and computers and use them thoroughly. Others with less capable phones or those lacking technical literacy will ‘google’ the word to see whether the autocomplete feature points to alternate spelling. This solution is a creative appropriation of Google's Autocomplete service, which suggests to its search engine common words or phrases associated with the content being typed. In these cases, young people in Balduino are not interested in the search itself, but in considering that the most common results showing on Autocomplete will likely be the formal version⁹². This Google search functionality is also useful because the person can look for a certain phrase to confirm if verb tenses and plural forms are correctly applied. Finally, if after using these resources they still do not feel sure about the spelling and cannot find a synonym, most decide not to post to avoid the possibility of being laughed at by peers online.

As my research happened during the period in which WhatsApp and mobile internet became popular, I followed the change in the quality of texts that locals sent during personal exchanges or posted on Facebook. The movement to WhatsApp is important in the sense that previously locals depended on internet cafes or home computers to interact on social media. As they embraced WhatsApp, they also started to use pay-as-you-go plans to access the Internet anytime and anywhere.

When I arrived in the settlement, their writing was like speaking (see Fonseca 2000:60-62). They spelled words as they sounded and many found full stops and commas vague abstractions that they used almost randomly. Also like their spoken Portuguese, their writing disregarded the often-confusing grammar rules concerning verbal tenses and the use of singular and plural. So, in the beginning of my fieldwork, I could see some serious language mistakes even among people who were university students. But gradually this

⁹² For example, searching for 'nos va' brings out as the first alternative showing the correct verbal tense 'nós vamos' [we go].

changed and, as I finish writing this thesis in the 2017, it is impressive to see the evolution of the textual content that they currently post online. Many of the recurrent misspellings and grammar misuses are now only rarely seen on Facebook and WhatsApp exchanges. The common mistakes that remain are the indiscriminate exchange of words with similar sound such as '*mais*' and '*mas*' or '*me*' and '*mim*'.

What is happening with teenagers and young people is also affecting children because of their interest for online gaming: being able to access the Internet and play online has become not just a common leisure activity but also a prestigious practice that leads to the acquisition of knowledge that improves literacy.



Fig. 5.3: Child playing a game using a smartphone.

5.2.3 Children and gaming

Balduino still does not have the same types of social hurdles as cities in the country. For instance, in the settlement there are not 'street kids' who have run away from home or were abandoned by their families. Even the more vulnerable children have a home and a parent or relative, so I was surprised one day to see a child beg for money near the cashier of the local bakery. However, as the baker quickly explained, he was not homeless. He lived with

his mother, but she worked all day and he (at 8 years old) stayed behind by himself. The money he was collecting was not, like the begging that we see in cities, to be used to buy food or drugs. He spent many hours in the Internet café across the street from the bakery and, since he did not have money to pay for the access, we would come to the bakery and collect a few coins before going back. The money was not used to access social media, as this does not particularly interest local children of that age, but to access game portals. He played these games to pass time, but also because this is also something that other children of his age are enchanted by.

Local children rarely have internet connected mobiles, so they either play more primitive games on their phones or rely on using computers. At a local NGO that provides extra-curricula education [*reforço*] to students, teachers take advantage of children's interest for gaming to negotiate deals for them to cooperate during class. Namely, the teacher offers time in the computer room in exchange for successfully answering questions on the topic being taught. However, teachers tend to talk about this situation with the same pessimism described previously in relation to their peers working on public schools. Chatting about this fascination for gaming, one of the educators explained that 'before the Internet, all they wanted was to be outside playing football...'. She paused for a moment, then added: 'at least playing football meant they were exercising...'.

This view often stresses the negative effects of gaming (such as having less time to do homework) which, despite sometimes being true, disregards the other consequences that result from the effort local children put into learning how to use digital media to play computer games.

As video game consoles are not so available to children as computers are, those who are aged 5 years and over play simple action games provided at certain portals⁹³. As instructions and other information are often written in English, they learn through practice in a context like apprenticeship that Lave and Wenger (1991, see also Lave 1988, 1996, 2011) called 'communities of practice'. Young gamers in Balduino learn by watching others play and exchanging tips with peers. However, the consequences go beyond gaming. To operate the computer, they are constantly using the keyboard to type words, names, URLs and passwords, which means that they are continuously using the alphabet and other

⁹³ Such as Friv.com, The Best Free Online Games! [Jogos | Juegos].

written symbols indicated on the keyboard to form words. More quickly than adults in general, they become proficient at using these machines: turning it on and off, navigating the visual interface using the mouse, being able open and run software and to manage digital files.



Fig. 5.4: Children playing games at the computers in a local NGO.

As the last sections argued, locals with few literacy skills now have new opportunities and motivation to learn.

5.4 Conclusion

The main question that this chapter intended to answer was whether locals are using social media for educational purposes and how this might be influencing their chances of improving their socioeconomic situation. This seems a tough objective considering how education itself represents a complex and sensitive issue in Balduino. While schools have improved radically since the 1990s, they also have become a disputed space in the settlement. Like Diego, most students see the advantages of finishing high school to have the diploma, but they are not particularly interested in paying attention to what teachers say during classes. However, despite the complexity of this issue, as the various cases

presented show, the answer to the question the chapter raises becomes straightforward after we clarify what we mean by 'education'. So below are the main consequences of social media based on the analyses presented.

If we take the view of education being the outcome of attending public schools as they exist today in the settlement, social media is both a threat to education and is amplifying the visibility of the failings of a poor system. Maria says that her aspiration for formal employment outside of the settlement resulted from her contact with peers and not with teachers. And Diego only finished high school because of the symbolic value of the diploma in the regional job market. As social media became more popular and as young people now have 24 hours per day, seven days per week access to the Internet in their pockets, it becomes increasingly visible that students are not interested in the institution of school. Hence the complaint from school staff that social media has a negative impact on their work. In fact, as they have alternative ways to exchange information and interact with each other, it is harder now to convince students to engage and participate in classroom activities.

However, if we ask whether social media helps people in the settlement to learn and to develop themselves professionally, then the answer is clearly yes. Diego may not have chosen to pursue a career in technology, but this does not keep him from 'messing around and geeking out' to solve software and hardware problems. But even more clear is the evidence that locals who previously had no interest in reading and writing are now practicing these skills as they use social media. They learn because of the practice of communicating using textual posts, but also because they are anxious about writing correctly. Similarly, children arrive at school more knowledgeable of the alphabet and of words, and of how to operate computers.

Finally, social media helps with the social aspect of transitioning to new possibilities of work and employment. This chapter showed in the cases of Ricardo and Maria how social relations can become difficult for those wanting to have personal projects different from the local norms and traditions. In the 1990s Ricardo was ostracised and ridiculed because of choosing to pursue a university degree and even now Maria's choice to prioritise a career over family resulted in distancing her from her mother. Many locals of impoverished rural backgrounds resist formal employment and schooling. WhatsApp and Facebook were used by Maria so she could be present in the settlement and nurture her

local relationships while being away. She kept her social networks, remained part of the flow of gossip and continued to display attention and support to their family and close friends. In short, social media became the settlement one could carry when away.

6

Religion and socioeconomic mobility

An important aspect of the low-income settlements in the Coconut Coast today is the large presence of evangelical Christian churches, which are affiliated with different branches of Protestantism including historical protestants such as Baptists and Methodists, Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals. Given the rapid religious shift from Catholicism to Protestantism in Brazil since the 1970s, and the promotion of values such as literacy and nuclear family formation, evangelical Christians are an important part of national debates around cultural, economic and social change in the country. In Balduino, like most people under 40 years old, younger evangelical Christians are also avid users of social media. In this chapter, I address the influence of new forms of Christianity in relation to the way locals use social media, aiming to consolidate the analysis about religion that is present in previous chapters.

It is useful to address religion at the end of this thesis because this theme is essential to the formation of colonial Brazil and has remained relevant throughout Brazilian history. Chapter 1 introduced key aspects of the country's colonial evolution, mentioning the importance that Jesuits had together with the Portuguese state in establishing settlements in the coast of Brazil since the 16th century. For example, the initial landing of Portuguese explorers in the Americas in 1500 was marked with the celebration of a mass and, much before the adoption of the name 'Brazil', the land they claimed was initially called Land of Saint Cross (*Terra de Santa Cruz*). Because of its size and formation, Brazil still has the world's largest catholic population and, until the 19th century, had Catholicism as the official religion of the state – people were forbidden to have a different religion. However, as Mafra (2001) explains, changes in the European religious landscape gradually opened the country up to Protestantism. These new churches initially expanded quietly and mainly through the most vulnerable population since the mid-19th century; then, from the 1970s, the number of evangelical Christians surged to nearly one fourth of the national population.

This chapter puts forward two main arguments about religion, both of which I discuss in relation to how locals are using social media in the settlement. The first, which is widely accepted by the research community studying protestant Christianity in Brazil, is that Protestantism positively impacts the lives of the low-income population. It improves their economic condition and promotes socioeconomic mobility by embracing education as an important aspect of personal development – and this is reflected in the ways they use social media. The second argument is relatively new to anthropologists and sociologists researching this topic. According to my findings in Balduino, the 'theology of prosperity', a distinguishing characteristic of Neo-Pentecostal churches, is now influencing religious practices – while generating tension – inside Pentecostal churches. And social media has become one of the arenas where this dispute is taking place.

In order to discuss evangelical Christianity, it is useful to consider the aspects of communication in the settlement which are related to religious manifestations that existed previous to the recent socioeconomic changes that resulted from the expansion of the tourism industry there. The initial sections of this chapter expand on the topics discussed in chapters one to three, as I propose an ethnographically-grounded analytical model to further examine indirect communication and social change in Balduino.

6.1 Before the popularization of the evangelical Christian faith

The census of Camaçari county in the mid-20th century (Ferreira, Filho and Faissol 1958) includes relevant data and also important omissions about religion. It informs, for example, that the predominant religion at that time was Catholicism, citing the number of churches and chapels operating in its territory. The source mentions the presence of one evangelical church, a (Pentecostal) Assembly of God, operating at the county's urban centre. The census data also records that out of the 13,500 inhabitants of this county, there was one 'white' (*branco*) for every nine 'brown' (*pardo*) or 'black' (*negro*) inhabitants. However, the census publication does not mention Afro-based religious groups that my informants in Balduíno often spoke about as existing in the settlement for many decades. It is thus accurate to suppose that, given the number of people of African ancestry in the county, the unaccounted Afro-based religions were popular religious manifestations in Camaçari.

While predominantly African descendants practiced *candomblé* and other African-based religions, Catholicism remained associated with hegemonic European views and morals. Older informants remember the time when the owner of the largest shop in the Balduíno built a new chapel in front of his business in the 1950s. This chapel, which is locally known as the Catholic church⁹⁴, is located at the highest part of Balduíno, an area that was, until recently, the centre of the settlement's urbanized hub. Other chapels in the region were similarly built by commercial bosses or land-owners at the front of their main properties⁹⁵.

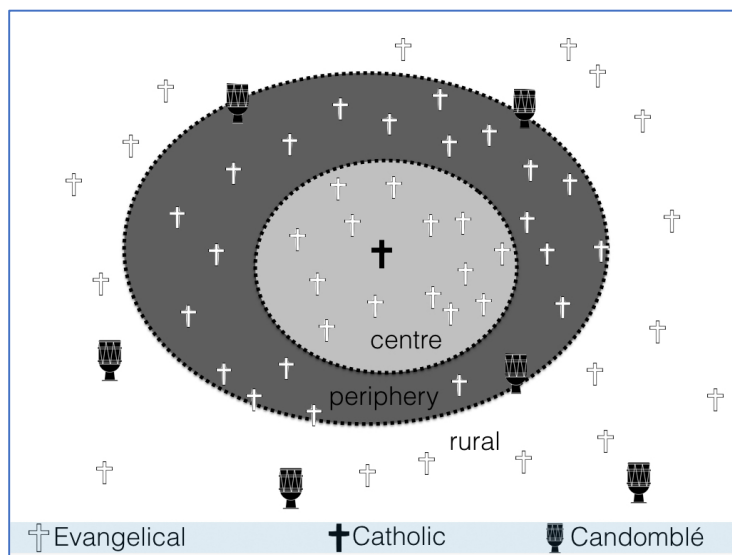
One of the early insights of my ethnography – discussed in chapters two and three – considers the polarity between catholic churches and Afro-Brazilian *candomblé* yards in Balduíno. Similarly to the 1958 census information, which refers to Christian organizations and is silent on Afro-based religions, the catholic church in Balduíno was built to be as visible and central as local *terreiros* (yards) generally remain hidden and peripheral. The church is at the top of a slope and at the highest part of the settlement's main street. This

⁹⁴ Although locals call it a church, it does not have a priest assigned to it. Weekly masses are conducted by a deacon. A priest based at another church in the region commutes to Balduíno to celebrate the mass on special occasions.

⁹⁵ The tradition of building churches dates back to the initial years of the Portuguese presence in the new world. Not far from Balduíno are the ruins Garcia D'Ávila Tower House, whose first building, a chapel, was built in 1549.

building is spatially isolated from other constructions, surrounded by the settlement's only plaza. Conversely, all *terreiros* active today are located at the border of Balduíno's urban area or in the rural areas near the settlement (see figure below), and all except for one lack written signs or other visual means to inform of their presence. These places of worship are kept visually similar to their surroundings so that only neighbours or people knowledgeable about these religious practices notice their presence.

The conclusion at this point, as discussed in chapter three, is that the geography of Balduíno can be divided between the morally-strict 'lights on' centre, where locals are careful to display obedience to hegemonic values, and the morally-loose camouflaged 'lights off' peripheries, inhabited by the least educated and dispossessed families. Like yards of *candomblé*, indirection (see chapter two) limits the visibility of communication by extracting contextual information or using direct face-to-face exchanges.



Ima. 6.1: The clear geographic separation between catholic church and candomblé yards in Balduíno does not affect the presence of evangelical churches in all areas of the settlement.

The gradual flourishing of evangelical churches since the 1970s blurred this moral landscape of areas occupied by educated owners in opposition to plots of unschooled dispossessed families. Both the catholic church and the *terreiros* remained there, but they are no longer predominant. Centre and peripheries in Balduíno now are occupied by a large number of evangelical churches of various sizes. The more popular are located in larger buildings near the centre and the less popular (together with small branches of the most popular) often are located at car garages of houses in the settlement's surrounding areas. They are all highly visible having entrances indicated by written signs. Their

presence is enhanced as routine services are ‘broadcasted’ through the use of potent audio amplifiers⁹⁶.

The different visibility of different religions connects this chapter with indirection, the main subject of chapter two. The next section provides an analytical model to examine the motivations – as seen on yards of candomblé – to avoid exposition.

6.1.1 The teaching of one’s place in the world

When I talk about invisibility in relation to the ethnography in Balduino, I am actually referring to two correlated processes. The first describes why some people are rendered invisible in society even if this is not what they desire. The second element takes place when those treated in this way use such invisibility as a cloak to hide the actions they may take against those who have the power to make them socially ‘disappear’. The specific literature about particularities of race relations in Brazil are in chapter one, being enough here to highlight Schwarcz (2013:29-35) explanation that:

‘the slave labour and the African presence in Brazil cannot be understood only as passive responses to an adverse environment. In fact, they invented their conditions of life and survival in the slave regime in two main ways: by negotiation and conflict. Through negotiation, bluff, bargaining and daily arrangements, enslaved forced the limits of slavery in endless negotiations, sometimes successful, sometimes unsuccessfully. Forms of negotiation included both demands for land and better working conditions as the defence of a playful and autonomous spiritual life – the right to play music, sing and play without the overseer’s consent, or to honour their gods by practicing Candomblé without police intrusion. Sometimes a bit of deterrence was necessary: when the state banned the worship of black deities, they appealed to Christian saints, a correspondence relationship in force today in the country. But when the negotiations failed, either by intransigence of the lord or impatience of the enslaved, this opened ways to conflict: individual and collective escapes, the formation of quilombos and, of course, uprisings and slave revolts.’

I will use this quote as a departure point to further examine a general polarity between colonizer/owner and colonized/dispossessed. In present day Balduino, as chapters

⁹⁶ I lived in the same block about one hundred meters behind the main Assembly of God building and during the Wednesday and Sunday (main) services I could hear the preaching from inside my house. If another large evangelical church was not also located near my house (and followed the same working hours), I would probably have been able to pay attention and understand the content being preached.

four and five examined, the word ‘slavery’ is again part of conversations associated with the expansion of the work market through the tourism industry. Low-income locals, especially older adults, complain frequently about new forms of work relations referring to their employment as ‘modern day slavery’. On the opposite side of this conversation, affluent bosses and managers say that quietly stealing things such as food, cutlery and bed linen are acts not circumscribed to a few ‘rotten apples’ out of many low-income employees, but are acts so widespread that stealing-related expenses are at times considered part of the costs of running a business there. Many of these managers or business owners admit to being disappointed and frustrated when they discover that employees they came to consider ‘trusted’ [*de confiança*] are regularly taking things from their workplace to their homes without consent. Since these bosses and managers position themselves as anything from conservative to liberal and progressive, they have different ways of seeing and explaining this phenomenon⁹⁷.

In general, bosses and managers also express frustration with the perceived lack of motivation locals have to improve their condition. They tend to see their businesses as contributors to the development of local communities as they assume to provide better payment and work conditions than the other sources of income – such as cropping or fishing. Bosses and managers would like their employees to acknowledge this ‘contribution’ and have a similar meritocratic mind-set of wanting to work hard in order to deserve career improvements. But their conclusion is that many locals are not ready for formal employment, are suspicious of formal work-relations and prefer to be loyal to their communities than to hold an individualistic attitude and appear as yes-men for their employers.

The visibility of action is an important aspect of the form of expropriation that managers and bosses often complain about. These acts can involve sophisticated illusions. The employee might move a desired object to a different location to see whether the object will be missed. If the boss notices the absence and suggests that the employee took it, the

⁹⁷ Here are some of the points of view they share. Homero, the owner of a small restaurant who worked as a chef in Germany before opening his business in the Coconut Coast, says the problem is cultural: locals have ‘a different understanding of property’. In their view, he explains, if the owner is not actively guarding a possession or has more than the essential to live, it is OK to take it away. There are bosses that react by echoing racist hateful framings (‘They were born in shit and now they like it there, they don’t want to live differently.’), others express left progressive understanding such as by saying: ‘they see me as the coloniser and it is just fair for them to do it’.

accused will ‘find’ the object and then make a scene about injustice and how the weak are constantly blamed for the mistakes of others. Some businesses then might oblige employees to use transparent bags to carry their personal belongings to work, as a measure to reduce stealing. Yet employees – such as the case of Vanessa, presented in chapter one – perceive this type of solution as offensive and shameful as it implies a moral judgement of character based on social strata. However, it is important to note that this modality of taking things when others are not looking is not only related to inter-class tensions as locals recurrently report similar practices happening inside the settlement among locals. Those from the settlement who leave fishing nets or lobster traps unassisted for too long at the river or at the beach often go back to find their catches have been stolen.

I suggest that locals in Balduino learn through practice, especially during the years before marriage, about having to hide actions that confront established norms. In other words, they learn that challenges and resistance to hegemonic norms can only take place by hiding certain actions. The understanding of this worldview results from paying attention to two domains of relationships: those of young people among peers and those between young people and adult relatives. My ethnography suggests that memories of slavery subsist in current practices of how low-income families in Balduino educate their offspring to survive in a segregated society. Parents and older relatives apply a similar violence to their children and teenage family members that was applied in the past to control slaves.

6.1.2 Memories of slavery

Stoller (1995:7) conceptualizes ritualistic practices such as spirit possessions as embodied phenomena⁹⁸, arguing that ‘the sentiment body is culturally consumed by a world filled with forces, smells, textures, sights, sounds and tastes, all of which trigger social memories’. My ethnography in Balduino provides a useful opportunity to examine the phenomenon that Stoller is referring to. There, I noticed that parents beat their offspring not only as the outcome of a specific misconduct, but also as a form of ritual that is repetitive and performed. In appearance, this practice resembles the private punishing actions which affluent families also use to educate their children, but there are aspects of these events in Balduino that can be described as ritual. Beating the offspring acts as a form of exorcism of

⁹⁸ Similar analysis about body incorporation appear on Nicolas Argenti’s (1998) study about performance and supplementarity in Camerron.

a spiritual evil presence that, if not treated with rigour, can and most likely will destroy the offspring and weaken the family.

Before developing this analysis further, I should present this specific aspect of family life in the settlement. We can start by looking at the relationships that young people have among themselves. Referring also to specific aspects of infancy she encountered during fieldwork, Goldstein (1998:389) argues that ‘childhood in Brazil is a privilege of the rich and is particularly non-existent for the poor.’ Though my ethnography confirms that, at least until recently, local children used to start helping at home as young as 5 or 6 years old, they also had a lot of leisure time and recurrently spent hours playing away from home. These social relations are true of the past, when these peers met in hidden peripheral areas, and of today, as social media becomes a significant element for recreating hidden spaces for non-monitored activities (as discusses in chapters two and three). Also, these children often describe their everyday interactions among themselves as consisting of ‘playing’ [*brincadeira*], but it is a ‘playing’ that constantly involves challenges, competition and ‘daring’ [*ousadia*⁹⁹], a verb that in Bahia has particular connotations, one that speaks to the condition of subaltern-ness (Ribeiro 2003), but that also echoes ethnographic work that describes bravery as a central part of the experience of becoming a young adult (Campbell 1964). Inside these peer-relations¹⁰⁰, young people push the limits of their actions¹⁰¹. For example, stealing a piece of fruit from a neighbour progresses to stealing a chicken and eventually to breaking into an unguarded country house.

Because daring increases the risks of being caught, parents often found out about their children’s misconducts and reprimanded them semi-publicly. The way parents find

⁹⁹ Daringness [*ousadia*] is a collective endeavour that often acts against the condition of subaltern-ness. Stealing is an example but there are several cases of boundaries related to being coloured: such as responding to someone of greater authority or displaying sexual interest for a woman of an affluent background. A close informant often described as being ‘*ousado*’ reports of how the family of his educated urban wife rejected him during decades because he was ‘ignorant’ [backward and illiterate] and worked as a fisherman.

¹⁰⁰ The word ‘friend’ [*amigo*] is not frequently used to describe this type of peer relations. The local word is ‘*colega*’, a term related to people that are in the same year at school. 17-year-old mother Sheila explains the difference between a friend and a peer saying: ‘while a friend wants what is best for you, peers want to see you screwed.’ Sheila refers here to the competitive aspect that bonds groups of peers.

¹⁰¹ Locals speak of daring in relation to fighting with rival groups from neighboring settlements, to having pre-marital sex, to stealing things, to disrespecting unspoken rules such as treating upper class visitors as equals.

out about their offspring's misbehaviours is relevant because the local social setting is constituted in densely integrated social networks. Traditionally the settlement is referred to as a sort of 'family' (see chapter four) in which each person is in different ways connected to the others, but it is important to point out how adults of affluent socioeconomic background (teachers, land proprietors) would more often report misbehaviour. Local adults in general talk about the shared responsibility for the moral upbringing of everyone else's offspring. This is important because there is a level of public shaming related to finding out through others that your child has done something wrong. The consequence, then, is that the child receives a semi-public beating. But while Lewis' (2011) research among urban low-income groups in Mexico analyses this common dimension of family life as a pathology (Fonseca 2000:30), I am presenting it here as a form of transferring survival skills in a context of segregation. These events of punishment were not extraordinary or even occasional, but part of everyday life in a cultural context that perceives children as being intrinsically morally corrupt (prone to wrongdoing) and parenthood and parental love as being expressed through violence.

Describing similar cases of family violence against children, Goldstein (1998) tries to paint a 'sympathetic portrait' of a low-income informant's cruel physical punishment of her offspring in order to 'offer some alternative explanations to the bourgeois discourse about child abuse'. She attempts to contextualize these acts through Freyre's (1970) classic study of Brazilian slave-based society saying that Freyre 'pointed out that Brazilian upper-class patriarchy in the nineteenth century, both in the rural and the urban settings, practiced a sadistic pedagogy over the child that meant to teach the latter "servile manners, self-effacement, and abject respect for these elders."' Freyre likened the education of the child to that of the slave: 'to conduct himself towards his elders as though he were being of a lower order.'" My ethnography builds on these contributions to suggest that through the beatings of the parent on his or her child passes on an embodied knowledge / experience of subaltern-ness that has the particularity of presenting itself as 'honest and hardworking' while also including the use of bluff and deferral to widen one's possibilities of action.

In Balduino, a parent that does not beat his or her offspring tends to be seen as cold and distant. These common acts of 'educational beating' are prescribed practices in which the offspring is taken to a part of the house – often the spacious back or front yard – and hit with a belt, a shoe or particular types of liana, a pack of nettle or lean branches from plants

known for causing pain. Though locals do not talk about these events as being an act or performance to an audience of neighbours, it is publicly acknowledged through the noise of the adult verbally reprimanding the child and of the child crying loudly. In the end, the performance of the parent shows neighbours that he or she is fulfilling their duty.

The different aspects of this phenomenon indicate that, when growing up in Balduíno, young people construct their identity in society through ‘daring’ among peers and, as an outcome of the acts of ‘daring’ discovered by adults, from being violently reprimanded by parents. While this is obviously only one aspect of more complex social and historical relations that take place in this particular location in Brazil and other areas historically affected by the Atlantic slave trade (Alencastro 2000, Shaw 2002), this description is coherent with the life experiences of the vast majority of low-income people in Balduíno. They all experienced – even those that were seen as well-behaved – growing up with constant sessions of educational beating from parents as a result of acts related to daringness [*ousadia*] that happened in the context of the relations with peers. Children are given (less willingly in recent years) the space and the time to be alone with their peers as if it is expected of them to get in trouble.

In short, beating the young is not an act against one individual offender but a performance and a practice that carries a moral teaching about one’s position in society. Similar to the spirit incorporations that Stoller (1995) examines, parents’ beatings resemble a ritual event, one in which the parent incorporates the spirit of the slave owner (and currently of the police¹⁰²), to give to his or her children the experience of how to (being

¹⁰² Though important ethnographies about urban violence refer to a loss of trust between low-income communities and the police (e.g. Zaluar 1985, Scheper-Hughes 1993, Velho 2000, Feltran 2011), Goldstein (2013) cites Holston and Caldeira’s (1998) discussion about Brazilian working classes, often the victims of police violence, supporting violent police actions. Writer and public intellectual Monteiro Lobato, the creator of the arguably best-known African Brazilian literary character in the 20th century, a house servant called Tia Nastácia, similarly says about her in his most popular fictional book (Monteiro Lobato 2014): ‘To be a police sheriff [*delegado de polícia*] was for Tia Nastácia the most important thing a man could become – “because he arrests people” – she explained.’ Another aspect of this same complex situation in Balduíno is the common reaction they have to justify when a local is murdered. The justification to the killing often implies that the person somehow deserved to die because of his or her probable guilt. The rationale is that one does not die unless there is a reason, so he (these cases normally are about men) was likely ‘involved’ in some kind of wrongdoing. Apparently the traditional worldview about family and family hierarchies included also the relationship with this other sphere of social relations. The police are seen as simultaneously part of the regulating forces of society and as an educational system for ‘taming’ the rebelliousness of certain offspring. As parents talk to me about educational beatings, they explain that their beatings come from love, different to the beatings that come from the police, which are

an undereducated person of colour) relate to others of higher socioeconomic position. If this solution fails and the child continues to be more interested in his or her peers than in relatives, locals speak of asking friends working at the police to arrest their offspring to give them 'a fright' (*um susto*). If that also proves inefficient and the grown child becomes a nuisance and a source of fear and stress for the family, older relatives might request that the police come to take away the misbehaving offspring.

This teaching about one's place in the world has been affected by the growing popularity of evangelical Christianity.

6.2 Visibility and the influence of Protestant ideology

The perspective of employers is that instead of showing disposition and working hard, the local workforce largely prefers to boycott and ridicule their superiors. Instead of openly confronting their superiors, locals react through acts of bluff and deferral. 'Clearly they don't want to improve,' says Heloísa, a quality assurance manager from Spain employed by an international resort, whose work routine consists of ensure that employees follow corporate and legal norms.

'For example, every day I go to the hotel's kitchen and repeat to the 80 employees there that they must take offerings when they cook and wear a cap so hair will not fall inside the food. I have to remember that the blue product is to be used on pans and the yellow product on the cutlery. Then the next day I will make the same visit and explain it all over again.'

Being born and raised in a progressive European environment, showing legitimate interest in Brazilian popular culture and being sensitive to socioeconomic matters, she sighs with disappointed with her own conclusion. Then she adds:

'When they make a mistake, they aren't willing to take responsibility. They will say to their superiors that they were only following my instructions. So it is not that they are not intelligent; they are, but they also resent authority and want to laugh while I am made a fool in front of them...'

neutral (not negative) and consequently not emotional. It is better to be beaten by the parent because the parent cares. As Goldstein's (2013:142-146) fieldwork also revealed, locals in Balduino explain that it is that beating will make the offspring 'honest and hardworking' and consequently – as the offspring carries a good reputation – this lowers the chances of them being caught, beaten and killed by the police.

The reason to bring up work relations in a chapter about religion is that changes in religion seem to be affecting the perception that employers and managers have about some low-income employees. For example, the hotel where Heloísa works uses a large room in its administrative building as a place for evangelic Christian employees to participate in services during their work time. Evangelicals in general have two important services during the week, one at night on Wednesdays and the other Sundays in the afternoon. Because these large hotel resorts are open every day of the week throughout the year, it is important to have teams of employees available 24 hours per day, seven days per week. This routine means that employees that are evangelicals initially were not happy having to work during the days of the services at their churches. The fact that managers had to find a solution to please and ultimately retain this particular group of their low-income workforce is an indication of how evangelicals are generally more appreciated by their bosses as workers.

The case of Melissa illustrates the advantages businesses in the Coconut Coast find in hiring evangelicals. She joined the Seventh Day Adventist church in Balduino five years ago when she was 23. At the time she converted, she recalls that she had lost control over her life, and would have suffered more if it wasn't for the 'power of the Lord' to transform people's lives. Before conversion, she and her partner were among the people with the lowest income in the region. Together they earned 500 reais (250 dollars) per month as informal hires that looked after a summer house. They had trouble finding and staying at better positions because both were alcoholics and her husband was a regular user of cocaine. They spent their money partying and had a tense and sometimes violent relationship. At a low point in her life, Melissa was seven months into her first pregnancy and felt depressed about her situation and the future ahead. As it is common in these cases, an evangelical person living in the neighbourhood started to invite Melissa to come with her to services at her church. When Melissa protested she did not have proper clothes to go to church, this person lent her own clothes to her.

After attending service as guest a few weekends in a row at the Adventist church, Melissa convinced her partner to come with her. They both eventually converted and gradually they felt their quality of life improve – giving up drugs in general and having constant activities at the church to keep them busy. After a few months, a person from her church recommended Melissa to take a permanent position as a cleaner at the home of this wealthy couple in Salvador. As this was a formal job, Melissa also had various benefits

besides the salary, but after a few months she was laid off because of a now common new complaint: Melissa, following a rigorous Christian ethical code, did not agree to lying. She was fired because one day, after she answered the phone for the missus, she refused to tell the caller the missus was not home. Finding a job at a hotel proved a better fit for her. Now she works mainly from Wednesday to Sunday, the commute to work is quicker, and she is constantly at the hotel in contact with other evangelical employees including the leader of her team. Her superiors appreciate that she is punctual, obedient and trustful.

Not every evangelical person adopts the same kind of ethics as Melissa. Apart from a few shared norms¹⁰³, the culture and rules vary according to the church. But in general bosses perceive their evangelical employees to be more dedicated to their jobs, more responsive to the career incentives, more reliable and punctual, and also with better levels of literacy than others of the same age. This is a general perception and evangelicals can adopt mixed practices that include, for example, efficient work performance and a degree of deferral. Vanessa, whose case I presented in chapter one, is well regarded as an employee at the hotel where she works, but she disobeys her bosses and secretly eats food cooked for guests. She justifies her behaviour as a compensation for the humiliation she experiences when her boss searches her bag before she leaves work.

The following section examines the evidence presented in this section in relation to the literature produced on the anthropology and sociology of religion (in Brazil and internationally) to further understand the consequences of evangelical Christianity. As the case of Melissa indicates, the new influences arriving through protestant morality appear to affect how these Christians communicate, which impacts their use of social media.

6.2.1 Changes in Christianity

Christianity is an important topic in studies concerning low-income population in Brazil. Its current relevance is reflected in the vastness and variety of studies related to Christianity produced by sociologists and anthropologists. I will initially refer to a sample of this body of literature to show how it is associated with themes beyond religion. For example, Pierucci (2004) analyzed the decline of Catholicism, Lutheranism and Umbanda in contemporary Brazil. Mariano (2004) studied the growth of Brazil's Pentecostal

¹⁰³ To become an effective member of a church and be baptized, in general a person needs to give up alcohol and other drugs and, to those who are in a relationship, to be faithful to his or her partner.

movement. Mariz (1995) contrasted the sociological perspectives about whether Pentecostalism promotes or limits socio-political change. The growing influence of Pentecostalism in state politics has been the topic of researches such as Oro (2006), Machado (2015), Machado and Burity (2014), and Pierucci (1992, 2010). Machado (2005, 2013) and Machado and Barros (2009) examined Pentecostalism and gender, while Birman (2012) explored Pentecostalism and divinity.

The expansion of studies on the topic of Christianity since the 1990s follows the increasing numbers of low-income Brazilians converting from Catholicism to Protestantism. As mentioned on chapter one, Roman Catholicism arrived during the initial years of the Iberian colonial presence in the Americas through Jesuit missionaries and was the official religion of Brazil until the late 19th century. Brazil still has more Catholics than any other country, but census data shows that since the 1970s, Catholicism fell from representing 91.8% of the population to 64.6% in 2010, while the number of Protestants increased from 5.2% to represent today nearly one fourth of all Brazilians. Considering the rate of conversion, analysts predict that in 30 years Protestants and Catholics will have communities of the same size in the country. A detailed analysis of this shift can be found in Birman and Leite (2000). Mafra (2013) also discussed these numbers referring to how the interpretation of this data concerning religion was used to negotiate political alliances.

My informal estimate is that between 30 and 40% of people living in Balduino are Protestant, yet it is important to point out that this number includes everyone from families who have been associated with the same church for two or more generations to individuals who sympathise with Protestantism but still have not committed to becoming part of a church. But while the national census has only one question about religion and Mafra exposed (2013) the biases narratives emerging from this laconic source of evidence, these statistics are significant quantitatively and they come to live by walking around a settlement like Balduino.

In this relatively small locality where around fifteen thousand people live, I counted twenty-four different church organizations operating. These include established groups such as the Assembly of God, one of the oldest Pentecostal churches in the country and the first to arrive in Balduino in the 1960s, and various others of different sizes including Baptists, Adventists, Methodists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists, plus several Neo-Pentecostal churches, the most important being the Universal Church of the

Kingdom of God. Locally also, the sizes of temples vary as well as the number of branches they have in the settlement. The most successful of these organizations is the Assembly of God. Its head-minister manages around 20 small branches operating in and near Balduino. In terms of size, another influential church in the locality is a 'Pentecostalized' Baptist church that follows an aggressive apostolic strategy called Vision G12, which started in South Korea. Each of these two more popular groups have up to or around four hundred attendees during each of their main weekly services on Wednesdays and Sundays, in the settlement's central area.

Conscious of the size and scope of influence Protestants have gained in Brazil in recent decades, a friend who works as an executive market researcher spoke informally about such religious organizations as the country's 'non-official welfare state'. He referred to these churches' role as one providing the most vulnerable groups with both material and immaterial benefits such as care and attention.

Recent scholarship supports his conclusion – accepted widely by scholars specialized in religion in Brazil – that the adoption of evangelical Christian faith improves the quality of life of families. For example, as Mafra (2001) explains that the choice to embrace Protestantism relates to how in the 19th century, people of different socioeconomic backgrounds were treated equally in Protestant churches – whereas in traditional catholic parishes and churches the humble were expected to give away his or her seat to the affluent as a sign of respect¹⁰⁴. She also describes that the religious shift from Catholicism to Protestantism follows the pattern of poor Brazilians relocating from rural areas in the Northeast to the peripheries of cities. When low income families arrive at urban peripheries that, like Balduino, lacked government services, Catholic organizations did not show the same interest as their protestant counterparts at being present in these new neighbourhoods.

Other research help understanding the context of vulnerability that is associated with the recent popularity of evangelical Christianity. Protestant Pentecostals, who

¹⁰⁴ Kesia, a 54-year-old informant born in Salvador confirmed the perception that to some low-income Brazilians the Catholic church is the 'rich people's church'. Being the fourth generation of her family going to the Baptist church, she recalls that during her teenage years, she and some church peers enjoyed visiting other Protestant churches after the Baptist service ended. But Kesia never dared going to a Catholic mass as she suspected that her father would not approve of it. Other older locals speak bitterly about Catholic priests, accusing them of promoting racist views.

emerged mainly from low-income groups (Mariz 1992), are predominantly urban, young, female and non-white individuals who spend less time at school and earn less money than the average population (Mariano 2004). Pierucci (2006) refers to a religious form that works as an '*in fieri* community [that] disconnects the people from their mother-culture, from a context that earlier seemed natural to them [...] making the stranger the true neighbour'. In Balduino, churches help both migrants and the younger generation of locals to resist the often challenging and distressful experiences of moving away from family-based webs of support while having to adapt to living in cities, to urban forms of violence, and to different types of work and employment. In such contexts, the adoption of Protestantism enhances the possibilities of forging new social relations and often also promotes literacy and financial prosperity.



Fig. 6.1: This is one of the more than twenty branches of the Assembly of God located in and near Balduino.

In the beginning of this chapter I argued that traditional family relations enforced subaltern worldviews, while the last sections suggest that adoption of an evangelical Christian faith encourages individualism, schooling and disciplined work as means to achieve progress and embrace modern values. The following case studies about how

evangelicals are using social media further the discussion about socioeconomic mobility that began in the previous chapter. Chapter five concluded that, different from the views that teachers tend to express, online socialization improves student's writing and reading skills, but does not motivate them to embrace formal education. However, children of evangelical Christian families tend to act differently and social media has become an important means for them to endure the frustrations caused by having unmotivated teachers and peers.

6.2.2 Networked individualism

André is an accountant whose family came from São Paulo, and his wife Helena was born in another settlement at the Coconut Coast. Not having a strong network of support in Balduíno, Helena found self-fulfilment and respect in becoming an experienced *maître* at the region's five-star tourist resort. The church Helena eventually joined adopts a productivity mentality similar to modern companies. Originally Baptists, some participants of this church found inspiration an organizational concept called G-12. Evangelizing, for them, is a key mean to one's development as a Christian, so participants are motivated to actively bring new people to the church. Each participant should establish twelve 'disciples' (as Jesus had) and carry on taking care of these twelve while also motivating them to form their own group of 'disciples'. There Helena found new possibilities of companionship and acceptance¹⁰⁵. She is respected as an energetic part of the organization and also receives support in her aims to move upwardly with her family as an employee of the hotel.

Helena's home is located only a couple of blocks from the settlement's commercial centre. It is a small but cosy two-bedroom house that is constantly being improved – as her non-evangelical husband explained humorously – because Helena 'doesn't want to look bad' in front of her church friends. Different to most others in their street, their home looks new: it is nicely painted, has sophisticated tiles and a nicely kept flower garden. Their only son Jonas, who is 16 years old and one year away from finishing high school, has a bedroom like stereotypical middle class teenage bedrooms as seen on TV programmes. At the bedroom entrance, there is a doormat with the image of the iPhone's unlock slide button

¹⁰⁵ Migrant families often complain, as I mention in chapter four, about the difficulties local families, particularly women and children, pose to accepting newcomers to local networks of sociality.

and at his bed there is a red and pink pillow that his girlfriend gave him printed with a selfie of them together surrounded by red hearts.

Jonas is a popular and friendly teenager and he likes hanging out with his neighbours and school peers, but at the same time, being in the settlement is not helping with his plans. He is still not sure whether he will go to university to study biology, engineering or law, but he is nevertheless sure that in a few years' time he will have a university degree. New private institutions now offer university education that is more attuned with the budget, interests and educational deficiencies of working class students. There are also now university quotas in public institutions and government scholarships available to students from low-income backgrounds to pay for university fees and, for those living in the Coconut Coast, university students also have free transportation to commute daily to and from Salvador, where universities are located. However, because he attends high school in Balduino he has reduced prospects for the future. His teachers regularly do not attend class and many of his peers like it that way because for them being in class (like in Diego's case in chapter five) is a necessary drag. This is when social media comes in.

Miller's (2016:19-20) ethnography about social media in England – also part of the *Why We Post* project – describes young people using different platforms according to different social relations they have: for instance, Twitter is for bantering with school peers, Facebook to relate to family, WhatsApp to interact with specific groups and Instagram to relate to people outside of their everyday circles. Jonas and his closest friends are active on social media in similar ways. They are constantly a step ahead of local peers in relation to online habits. He started using WhatsApp earlier than most and, while locals tend to prefer to be in the same online places as everyone else (see chapter one), Jonas likes to explore. When celebrities like footballer Neymar started publishing photos on Instagram, he also became a regular user and was excited when another Brazilian 'living in the United States!' started liking his photos and interacting with him. Recently he has been one of the first locals to use SnapChat. In short, social media helps Jonas to cultivate relationships with people that are not necessarily living in the same place as him but that share his interests and ambitions.

'Networked individualism' is a concept describing how digital communication becomes an alternative for those living inside 'small, densely knit groups such as households, communities, and workgroups' (Rainie and Wellman 2012:6-7). Instead of

being 'embedded in groups', digitally mediated social relations allow the person to become the focus, 'not the family, not the work unit, not the neighbourhood, and not the social group' (Rainie and Wellman 2012:6). Just like Jonas, networked individuals use their online networks 'to find support, solve problems, and improve their knowledge and skills' (Rainie and Wellman 2012:7).

Jonas optimistically estimates that only three out of ten of his peers will go to university, but concedes that fewer will be able to start a career using their diplomas. As success cases, he mentions a woman from the settlement who finished a law degree and is prospering after she opened the first law firm in Balduíno; a dentist who also has his clinic there; and a nutritionist who now works at a physiotherapy clinic in the Coconut Coast. But although he acknowledges that (especially as the country's economy slows) few people with university degrees have work opportunities in their field, they still have better prospects to be employed in more prestigious office jobs in hotels. As he says, these people are going after their dreams; they are not '*acomodados*' [laid back]. *Acomodados*, he explains, are content to live in a home on top of or next to relatives' homes. Instead, he wants to afford his 'own place' [*meu espaço*], not on top of his parents' home, not even on the same street. His use of social media mirrors his intention: to achieve financial independence through a career and likely move away from Balduíno.

In the following section, a case study further connects the ideas of this chapter with the previous one about education and work. Below, I present the cases of a mother and a daughter, both members of the local Assembly of God, to describe their experiences with formal education, formal employment and their uses and views about social media.

6.2.3 Evangelicals, education and social media

With the economic development of the region, especially since the arrival of international hotel companies in the 2000s, Michelle found employment at an industrial laundry and gradually acquired knowledge of the work and gained the trust of the owners to be offered the position of manager. She accepted the offer and welcomed the increased income, but eventually decided to quit because 'that money became too expensive to earn'. This relates to how much time working consumed of her day and the emotional toll of anxiety and insomnia it brought her. She says it was a difficult decision to leave that job because of the things her family could achieve thanks to her salary. Not having the same income made it

challenging to pay the monthly university fees for her two daughters. But, as a daily cleaner, she has more control of her time, can earn extra cash when there are opportunities to do so, and otherwise she uses her free time to visit and care for friends and relatives and to travel (sometimes nationally) as a guest preacher in branches of the Assembly of God.

Michelle only developed her ability to read thanks to a prolonged effort to comprehend Biblical texts, and yet today, after many years of daily reading, she finds it difficult and tedious to read other books. Her uneasiness regarding reading appears in her resistance to use social media by herself. At home, the family has a computer and broadband, which is mostly used by young people: sons, daughters and other friends and relatives who are constantly there. Her daughters created a Facebook profile for her (she has over 600 friends), but Michelle only accesses Facebook through their mediation. Each time one of the daughters is online, she logs in to her page, go through the notifications reading them aloud so Michelle can respond also orally and the daughter types her replies.

As it is more and more common in the region, the literacy gap between Michelle and her offspring is wide (more about this on chapter 5), and this reflects on the importance social media has in their lives. In the mid-1970s, at the age of 17, Michelle was starting to attend night classes to learn how to read and write. At 17-years-old, Michelle's daughter Marina was finishing high school. And in contrast to her mother, Marina's career depends on her using social media for many hours every day.

Marina's working week for the three years of the psychology programme was not easy. She was employed at a paid part-time internship programme and to manage both study and work she travelled twice to the city and back every day¹⁰⁶, leaving home first at 5am and going to sleep around midnight. Because of the distance and of city traffic, Marina reached her university almost at the time the first class started and had to leave soon after the last lecture to catch the last buses back home, leaving scant time for her to enjoy the social aspect of the course and hang out with peers with similar interests, ambitions, and curiosities.

In the complex context of long daily commutes and limited time available outside of the classroom, email, Facebook, and more recently WhatsApp became an essential part of her life as a university student. She – and other locals in the same situation – use these

¹⁰⁶ Part of motivations to travel twice is that Marina could use free transportation provided by the government to low-income university students, and at home she would not spend money on meals.

intensively for personal and group communication in relation to studying and other university activities such as to coordinate group assignments, share information about work opportunities, and to communicate about traffic disturbances that could affect their journey to and from class. Marina also managed to follow what happened among students thanks to social media. She was part of Facebook groups with hundreds of participants (bringing together groups with hundreds of participants such as all undergraduates from her university, or all psychology students) and of smaller WhatsApp groups connecting people of the different courses she took, and also very private groups with just her closest friends at university.

Being a practicing evangelical Christian from an austere evangelical church represented a social challenge for Marina when she started her university degree. Being an 'evangelical', she explains, makes it harder to win the respect of some colleagues. She felt undervalued and labelled her as narrow-minded because of stereotypical views such as of evangelical Christians believing in creationism over scientific evidence. The problem was double fold: being an active member of her church in Balduino, in the settlement she does not feel comfortable interacting with people with other religious affiliations, particularly Afro-Brazilian religious groups, which are demonised by evangelical Christians. In this regard, Marina attributes to Facebook and WhatsApp the solution to remain part of both worlds. In university, she could develop friendships with people who she admired independently of their religious background because, although she was mostly physically away, she was able to participate in their conversations and show that her faith did not blind her critical thinking.

Marina sees this effort to socialise beyond the circles of religious affiliations as a contribution to the evangelical community: she successfully presents herself outside of her religious circles as an 'open minded evangelical' and in doing so, she helps to reduce the prejudices associated with being an evangelical Christian. At the same time – and similarly to the case of Maria presented on chapter five – Marina used social media also to keep in touch with her friends and the community from her church. She followed their everyday conversations and remained respected and admired in her local social groups. And because of this capacity to interconnect these two groups, she confronted a deep-rooted local tradition of women straightening their hair (using often dangerous chemicals and hot iron tools) to gradually adopt an Afro look. Her proximity to black pride advocates in university

made her aware of the consequences of colonialism and segregation in Brazil. She posted the transitions as selfies on Facebook and received online support required for her to face up the resistance she experienced in the settlement.

The following section discusses evangelical Christianity in relation to a distinguished feature of Neo-Pentecostalism called the 'theology of prosperity', which has been influencing also Pentecostal organizations.

6.3 Protestantism and the 'theology of prosperity'

In Weber's classic study of protestant ethic (2002), economic progress among Protestants is a result of an austere lifestyle that does not reject but engages with the world through work and production of wealth. However, Schama's (1998) history of Dutch culture during their 'golden age' of economic prosperity cautions the reader to Weber's fetishizing of Protestant asceticism and the actual influence its ethics had on the development of capitalism.

Campbell (2005) advances this critique, pointing out the tense complementarity – absent in Weber's explanatory model – between utilitarian puritanism and romanticism as phenomena of the Modern Age and fundamental to the development of capitalism. This theoretical background is important for considering the relationship between Protestantism's various branches established in Balduino and their consequences in terms of economic prosperity.

Besides historic protestant groups such as Baptists and Methodists, the other important local branches of Protestantism are Pentecostals and Neo Pentecostals. Pentecostal churches are a late 19th century phenomenon. Its participants historically place a significant importance on a personal experience with God, which is manifested using 'spiritual gifts' such as healing, incorporating the Holy Spirit or speaking in tongues (Mafra 2001). Originating in the mid-20th century United States, Neo-Pentecostal churches directly associate religious conversion with a path to achieve material wealth and upward mobility and are thus commonly described as preaching a 'theology of prosperity' (Mafra 2001, Mariano 2004). Swatowski (2009) examined how Pentecostalism has also become an enabler for the low-income to embrace modernity and prosperity through entrepreneurship. Lima (2007) posits that the success of Neo-Pentecostal churches in Brazil among the low-income population since the 1990s reflects a context of national promotion of neoliberal capitalist values concerning individual aspiration and achievement.

There are many causes for the financial prosperity that these protestants experience. As Mafra, Swatowski and Sampaio (2012) argue, 'In peripheral countries and in post-colonial contexts, [Neo-Pentecostal organizations] operate successfully exactly where the population learned to submit to a high level of social control as a strategy to access 'social goods''. This translates, for instance, in effectively tackling alcoholism (and almost consequently domestic violence), promoting conjugal fidelity and offering emotional comfort to those coming from rural backgrounds to transition to the work culture and rhythms of the formal labour market. In the case of Helena, Jonas' mother, it provided emotional support to the challenges of adapting to formal work routines. And while traditionally women are criticized for not being at home to raise their children, at church her employment and access to money was accepted and praised.

Despite the variety of evangelical Christian organizations that exist today in Brazil (Mariano 2010), this Protestant population often identify themselves (and are called by others) as '*crentes*' [believers] or '*evangélicos*' [evangelicals]. These terms and 'evangelical Christian' refer broadly to a population that includes historic Protestants, Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals. Although originally these groups have very distinguished identities and ways of understanding and practicing Christianity, their differences are not as clear in present-day Balduino. While the theology of prosperity is traditionally associated with Neo-Pentecostalism (Mariano 1996), the church perceived as elite in the settlement is the Pentecostal Assembly of God and its members portray themselves both as strict and prosperous. As a junior Assembly minister explained, 'it is OK to ask God for a car as long as the purpose of having the car is to help the church.'

During the week's main services at the main local branch of the Assembly of God, shiny new cars and motorcycles crowd the entrance of the church and block nearly all of the traffic in the settlement's main street. Another occasion to observe the growing importance of financial prosperity there was the pompous and royal-like birthday party of the head-minister. As part of the special service, other distinguished head-ministers were announced and offered publicly their gifts, which were purchased in shopping malls and displayed the logos of prestigious brands (such as Zara or Banana Republic), and during the dinner that followed the ceremony, these guests sat separately at a high table and were served special food, while regular church members were offered fast food meals. However, the recent shift at the local Assembly of God from displaying modesty and good behaviour

to displaying aspiration and economic prosperity has not been fully embraced by the church's members. Dissident groups complain more or less openly, among other things, that some locals are not coming to service because they are ashamed of the clothes they have in relation to the expensive clothes that participants are now wearing. The head-minister is also criticized for valorising ostentation and offering status positions to individuals and families that can contribute more money to the church.

Speaking also about other Protestant groups, the ethnography in Balduino coincides with Machado's (2001) analysis of the reduction of the differences between Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals in Brazil. Members of other organizations such as the Seventh Day Adventists are not as gregarious about appearance and conspicuous consumption, but are equally concerned about displaying their religious devotion as well as achieving prosperity. While local non-evangelicals are often informal autonomous workers or public servants, evangelical Christians invest in education and build their prosperity through dedication to formal employment or through energetically running small businesses.



Fig. 6.2: These are evangelical Christians during a service. In these and other church activities they participate wearing suits and ties in the case of men and dresses for women.

As the theology of prosperity expands its reach beyond Neo-Pentecostal organizations, this change generates tensions among participants of Pentecostal and historical protestant churches. For example, 54-year-old Baptist Kesia reflects on the influences these new organizations have outside of their churches. She acknowledges that Baptists became more active and organized in terms of promoting their faith: while in the past the effort that members of her church made to bring in new people happened informally (one would occasionally invite a friend from school or from work to come to service), today this activity became structured and they organize teams to go around the settlement on specific days to present their church and invite neighbours to come to service. However, she remains critical of the idea of promoting Christianity through the promise of material compensation.

So far the chapter has addressed non-evangelicals and evangelicals separately. The following section shows how the influence of evangelic Christianity reaches beyond the community that adopts this religious faith, and yet I will argue that religion has become the clearest symbolic difference separating people that live in Balduino.

6.3.1 Evangelical Christianity's influence and prejudice

Independent of their faith or religious views, young people in general perceive gospel music as one of the genres of music they listen to regularly – while it is equally true that young evangelical Christians also follow non-religious pop artists¹⁰⁷. So, it is not considered strange that non-evangelical young people include gospel hits in their music collection. However, while in the past it was common in the settlement for people to participate in *candomblé* 'parties' (which involve ritualistic dance and music, spiritual incorporation, sacrifices of animals, and food offered free to attendees), today many non-evangelicals gave up participating in these events or allowing their children to attend. This happens after the continuous attacks of evangelical Christians that systematically denounce Afro-Brazilian faiths as being inspired by the devil (Mariz 1997).

These influences, adopted from the growing presence of Protestants, appear in the settlement together with continuous criticism and rejection of evangelical Christians. This is such a strong characteristic that I consider the clearest symbolic frontier among locals to

¹⁰⁷ About gospel music in Brazil, see also: Dolghie (2004).

be between non-evangelicals and evangelicals. Non-evangelicals' perception of evangelicals does not distinguish between what they see as moral and material arrogance: the 'celestial' pride Pentecostals show through strictness and devotion merges with Neo-Pentecostals' appetite for financial and 'worldly' success. They also do not point criticism towards one specific church – although they will differentiate individuals that are exceptions to the rule. Catholics, non-church goers¹⁰⁸ and disciples of Afro-Brazilian religions tend to similarly portray evangelicals in general as hypocrites that like to preach about the Bible but underneath the surface are greedy, selfish and sin more than everyone else. In synthesis, what many dislike about evangelicals is their claim of superiority: non-evangelicals say that evangelicals think too highly of themselves [*se acham*] and behave as if they are morally superior to everyone else. For them, evangelicals pretend to follow Jesus' teachings about loving one another while in fact they only love themselves and those close to them.

This polarization of opinion can be found in other domains. Though evangelical Christianity is a national and international phenomenon, evangelicals are often portrayed by the more affluent media outlets, as well as in academia, as closed-minded fanatics. Hardin (1991) argues that Christians are a type of 'other' often rejected by anthropologists as anti-modern (instead of non-modern) that do not accept the passive position of other vulnerable 'others'. Similarly, in Brazil, progressive affluent circles tend to frame Pentecostals as being homogenous and intrinsically backward (Alexandre 2014). Mariz (1995) points to the need to 'criticize the criticism' social scientists make of religious movements. He points to Pentecostals being criticized either because of their political alienation or their political participation, either because they are too dogmatic and place greatest importance in salvation, or because they are too flexible and too materialistic.

Outside some narrow academic circles that include social scientists studying low-income groups, evangelicals' contributions to society are almost unacknowledged or treated as manipulation from merchants of faith. Birman and Lehmann (1999) discuss the threat that Neo-Pentecostalism brought to Brazil's elite and how this tension has echoed in public debates. Few recognize – as if nothing positive should be said about them – that evangelical

¹⁰⁸ I use the term 'non-church goers' because in Balduino people very rarely identified themselves as atheists. The population that does not go to church and are not associated with Afro-Brazilian religions identify themselves as 'faithful' and say that they have their ways of communicating with God. About this, see also: Novaes (2004).

organisations actively promote literacy – as Protestantism is founded on the idea of the individual being able to relate directly with God by reading the Bible – and connect church members to specialised professionals including doctors and lawyers. By 'recycling the souls' of drug addicts and criminals, they provide a service to society much better than the police could ever hope to offer (Birman and Machado 2012, Machado 2014).

The following case exemplifies the internal disputes inside a Pentecostal church because of the popularization of the theology of prosperity, and how social media plays a part in this struggle.

6.3.2 Social media and church politics

Evangelical Christians in Balduino are particularly interested in social media and computers. Evangelical parents are not alone in voicing fears about the potential threats of leaving their children unsupervised at internet cafés, but as chapter four shows, they are in general more concerned with trying to control the whereabouts of their offspring. These often-working parents use digital technology to stay in touch with offspring, making an effort to provide internet access as a motivation for their offspring to spend more time at home. Social media is also used as a 'window' for neighbours and relatives living elsewhere to see the family's financial progress through photos of the interior of the home, their strong family bonds, their vacations and other practices such as dressing up to go to church. Finally, social media is an important space for local Protestants to carry on relationships with others from their religious social circles living elsewhere or to access an endless source of content – mainly on YouTube – that include videos of preaching and Gospel music, but also of news and literature that appeal to this segment.

However, the elements that I mentioned above produce a narrative of evangelical Christians that is flat and without conflict. From the outside, these stereotypical 'evangelicals' often represent uncritical but financially ambitious people with conservative family views (against abortion and gay rights, etc.) and who have been incorporating neoliberal values about individualism and prosperity. This section, however, analyses the role social media plays in the negotiation of conflicts between groups representing different

values and ideologies regarding the recent incorporation of meritocratic work views that are not originally a key element in Pentecostal organizations¹⁰⁹.

Sandra is 34 years old and moved to Balduino from a favela in Salvador as a child. She is among the few locals I knew that not just reads well but enjoys reading as entertainment. But she has no interest or intention of turning this valued training into a better paying job. She works part-time at a shop in the settlement, does not have children and treasures the fact that every day she has half a day just for herself to watch TV, listen to music, pray and to write in her diary. When others press her to stop being '*acomodada*' [laid back, lazy], she replies she has done her share of hard work in life. She says that while thinking about the ten years that she worked as a child servant, a topic in Brazilian anthropology that Fonseca discussed (2002a, 2002c, 2003, 2004).

This began when Sandra was 5 years old. In addition to her daily work load, she also suffered several situations of violence and abuse¹¹⁰.

Protestant Christianity is an important part of Sandra's identity and she treasures the moral respect that she feels belonging to the Assembly of God gives her. Her life constantly involves talking about the Bible with her peers and family members and participating in events at her church. Like other devoted Christians, she knows by heart countless literary quotes and stories from the Bible. However, because Sandra joined the church as an adult, she has had difficulties becoming a full member. To do so, she needs to be baptized, but the current head-minister has strict rules and will not marry individuals that are currently living or have previously been living with partners – because he defends religious marriage should only happen once. Holding the status of 'together' [*juntada*], she cannot be baptized.

Sandra is not among the financially successful and ambitious who offer regular tithes to the church and she cannot come to service in fashionable clothes, so staying in this intermediate condition – not officially being accepted as part of the church - makes her feel like an outsider. Without baptism, she cannot sit in the prestigious 'married women' section

¹⁰⁹ As chapter one has presented, there are sensible differences inside this community, for example between historic protestant denominations such as the Baptists, which arrived in Brazil in the mid-1800s; Pentecostal organizations such as the Assembly of God established in the early 1900s, and Neo Pentecostal churches such as the Universal Church of the Reign of God, formed in the 1970s and famous for promoting the 'theology of prosperity'.

¹¹⁰ Sandra's example is further detailed here: Miller et al. (2016: 128-41).

of the church during services. She also cannot participate in some activities restricted to full members or hold prestigious positions such as teaching children at Sunday Bible school.

Like others in her congregation, Sandra resents the growing influence inside the church of people that, in her view, are distorting the purpose of the Assembly of God by making 'superficial things' such as branded clothes and cars more important than one's personal faith and practices. In Sandra's case, her wedding became a key political right she fought to acquire, and Facebook was important to make her achievement be seen and recognized among her peers at the church.

Sandra says her wedding happened because of the 'grace of the Lord, as a recognition of her faith and devotion'. She adds that God has shown the merit she has by praising her with 'a beautiful wedding party that people with much more money than her did not have'. However, her ceremony is as an example of the importance that networks of mutual help still have in the locality these days. Sandra borrowed money to buy some of the ingredients to prepare the food and to rent the expensive-looking white dress she wore that night, but everything else resulted from weeks of collaboration by her networks of friends and relatives, many of whom belonged to the same church and hold similar views to Sandra. These collaborations include providing material gifts such as the donation of flowers and fruits, the participation of people volunteering their work (singing and playing music, cooking, driving, photographing), and the use of political relations to have the party at a local public school. The previous head-minister of the church, still an active participant of the Assembly of God, came to Balduino to conduct the ceremony, thereby making it religiously official.

Sandra's marriage gave her political capital as its success was framed through the internal logic of evangelical Christianity as resulting from the will of God. The head-minister had declined Sandra's request for him to marry her and consequently created greater difficulties for the wedding to happen since she could not use the local church for the ceremony (and would have to rent another space¹¹¹). Facebook was strategic in the unfolding of this power struggle. It was there that the photos of the wedding were placed

¹¹¹ At the end, her network of family and friends got the permission to use one of the local public schools for the ceremony.

the day after the ceremony and, because it was an impressive party, these photos circulated inside and outside the church community.

While gossip would disseminate the success of her wedding to the settlement, Sandra's family saw Facebook as an important ally to further promote the achievement. The images on Facebook attract shares, 'likes', and comments, not just from the locality, but from extended networks outside of the settlement. The photos alone count as a display of success, but the display of approval from her social circles adds value to them.

6.4 Conclusion

The initial section of this chapter related religion to the topics discussed at the beginning of the thesis. We saw in chapter two that locals, particularly women, are active users of indirection to widen their possibilities of communicating in contexts of dense sociality and socioeconomic segregation. Being able to limit the understanding of one's conversations is useful; it allows them to cultivate networks of mutual help discussing sensitive events and sharing sensitive information. Chapter three further examines local patterns of communication by contrasting the typical visibility of Catholic churches with the typical camouflaging of *candomblé* yards. These levels of exposition appear, for example, in the opposing geographical locations *candomblé* yards and catholic churches occupy.

This chapter considers the recent popularization of Protestantism in Balduino as a reaction to this segregated and inward-facing societal context. Its initial sections present an analytical model to explain the perpetuation, through embodiment and the memory of slavery, of a social environment that discourages individuality and enforces family and age-based hierarchies. Together with evangelical Christianity, online communication has become a valuable channel for promoting different values that include individualism and meritocracy. Instead of relying on bluff and deterrence, Protestants are encouraged to expose the prosperity that results from personal effort. The notion of networked individualism, as presented here, applies to how Jonas managed to stay in touch with other people of his age that, different from most of his school peers and neighbours, see university education as a path to consolidate an upward socioeconomic mobility to a living-standard nearer to those of middle-class Brazilians. Similarly, Marina used the possibilities and advantages of social media, which adults have not yet mastered, to present herself as open-minded to her university peers while retaining contact with her local network at the

settlement and at her church. Using social media helped Marina to shape and adopt an image of a forward-thinking evangelical.

Social media also has different uses inside the settlement's Protestant community besides promoting values associated with prosperity and individuality. Evangelicals of different traditions express contrasting views about the theology of prosperity. Historical protestants, for example, tend to agree that going to church and participating in church activities encourages literacy and promotes discipline and organization that, as a consequence, may help people to prosper, but they are suspicious and critical of the idea of promising wealth in exchange for conversion as Neo-Pentecostalism does.

Nowhere in Balduino this debate is more evident than in Pentecostal churches, as this Protestant branch has been gradually incorporating aspects of the theology of prosperity. Sandra's case shows social media serving the purpose of defending original values of Pentecostalism and resisting the new trends. Online platforms help displaying her commitment to strict norms and intense devotion. To Sandra, what matters is not having the money to pay for a pompous wedding ceremony. Being able to have a pompous ceremony without having money is what really indicates, for her, God's blessings. In this situation, it was not individualism and meritocracy but the solidarity of church peers that counted, and social media was important to communicate what she perceived as God's blessings. Those who were not at the party could see through Facebook the images showing how successful the event was.

Conclusion

Change is the main contextual aspect about Balduíno - that which, as chapter one points out, bonds together its recent history, the region's colonial legacy, and the theme of communication associated with social media. Consequently, the focus of this research has not been the effects that using or not using social media has on the low-income population of the Coconut Coast, in Bahia. My aim is to record and analyse how these Brazilians are understanding and using social media as the world around them changes or, in other words, how social media is being used to respond to these changes. This thesis unpacks a highly complex encounter with clear parallels between the impacts of social media itself and the transformations in society that create this particular manifestation of social media. For this reason, we are constantly shifting perspectives from top-down to bottom-up, public-facing to private-facing, forward-looking to backward-looking focus, because all of these are implicated in this situation of change. Making these entanglements clearer is the conclusion and task of this thesis.

As Chapter one described, to talk about change in the Coconut Coast refers to a rather sudden and rapid evolution of tourism in the area and the effects it has produced in terms of new work opportunities causing the arrival of migrants. Anthropologist Gilberto Velho (2007) refers to the 'gigantic growth of the populations that live in urban centres' as a key social phenomenon in contemporary Brazil. The largest migratory pattern during this period is of families leaving the semi-rural regions of the Northeast for large cities in the country's Southeast or elsewhere. Balduíno started in the 1950s as a rural area and has now become an attractive place for migrant families to travel to.

During most of the twentieth century, Balduíno was a rural village inhabited by no more than a few hundred people (most of whom were unschooled peasants of African or mixed ethnic background), but it is now part of the metropolitan area of Salvador, the country's third largest city. Old-fashioned farming methods, together with traditional fishing, cropping and collectivist economy started to be replaced in the 1950s, when a road opened enabling the circulation of motor vehicles of affluent city-dwellers. As these wealthy urbanites built second homes for use at weekends and holidays, locals started working professionally as builders. Affluent visitors also purchased local seafood and hired cooks, cleaners and security guards. Money, previously only rarely seen in the settlement, began to circulate more commonly. A daily bus service started in the 1960s, a paved road to the capital opened in the 1970s and a growing number of tourism-related businesses have been established there since the 1980s. These include five large-scale international hotels today owned by foreign business groups. With these new job opportunities, Balduíno has grown in recent decades into a working-class settlement with a population of 15,000, most having similar ethnic background and arriving from the capital or the hinterlands of Bahia.

The impact of such changes need to be considered not only in terms of the absence of urban infrastructure to welcome low-income migrants to the region, but also in relation to how such migrants are being integrated into this urban society. According to census data and the report of locals, people in Balduíno lived (up until the 1950s) under socioeconomic conditions which were, in many regards, similar to those of medieval Europe¹¹². The

¹¹² I refer particularly here to Bloch's analysis of feudalism being economically based on payment for the use of land through moveable objects. In Balduíno, peasants also paid for land use in produce. Local fishermen still employ the same system: they pay to be part of a crew by giving the boat's owner half of their catches and selling the other half for a determined price. Locals still complain today about working according to the clock (instead of the time of the season). They also resent the fact that they work with strangers rather than with extended families and friends, and that they have to leave their families behind and be subordinate to bosses who often show prejudice in how they treat employees. See Bloch, M. 2014. *Feudal society*. New York and London: Routledge.

changes that Europe experienced over the course of many centuries, and particularly during the last two, have occurred in Balduino within roughly two generations. Many locals and migrants have little or no formal education and recently began to look for urban jobs that they do not have the experience to perform well at – for example, working continuously for eight hours and having to obey managers and bosses.

The consequences of urbanisation, including new transport and telecommunications infrastructure, have been profound. In 30 years, locals have gone from not having running water or electricity to being connected to the rest of the world via cable TV and broadband internet. For those in formal employment, payments now arrive in a bank account, which also means easy access to bank credit. Locals today consume goods and services that until recently were the exclusive province of affluent consumers, from air travel and cable television to sending children to universities. Chapter five describes how four years of optional basic education has now become twelve years of compulsory school attendance, during which time students receive government incentives to study. Though far from ideal, services such as public healthcare and the police do at least exist in Balduino. Perhaps the most drastic change is in religion. Balduino has experienced a ‘Protestant revolution’ which transformed the religious landscape of the area in just a few decades. From having only one Catholic chapel and a few hidden *candomblé* yards, the settlement now also has over twenty different denominations of evangelical Christian organisations.

In this background of intense change, in Brazil as a whole – and Balduino is no exception – the low-income population has shown great enthusiasm for social media. Despite the many limitations they have faced and still face, including lacking government support or the money to purchase computers, this socioeconomic group started gathering in internet cafés in poor neighbourhoods (Lemos and Martini 2010), overcoming limitations in reading and writing. Initially, the low-income joined Orkut, the most popular social media platform at the time in Brazil, to be publicly ridiculed and exposed by affluent users because of their ‘ignorance’ and ‘bad taste’ (Cruz 2012). As the interest in social media increased and the national economy prospered, during the transition from the 2000s to the 2010s, many low-income families used bank credit paid over many instalments to finally get their own computers at home.

In places such as Balduino, a settlement evolving out of a fishing village, there were other barriers to social media inclusion. Before mobile connectivity became so widespread,

the lack of cable infrastructure offered an opportunity for small entrepreneurs to re-sell internet broadband connection transmitted through radio signals. In the late 2000s, when computers began to appear in the homes of locals, teenagers assumed the responsibility of teaching older relatives how to operate them and to navigate the internet. As chapter three on visual postings explains, even the generally low levels of literacy did not prevent many adults from eventually embracing the possibilities of social media; now they too can follow the lives of people online and 'skype' with relatives living away. This involvement with social media finally consolidated in the second half of 2013 when teenagers learned about WhatsApp – a social media platform that runs well even on less expensive Android smartphones. Now most people under 40 years old in Balduino have acquired a good enough smartphone to take advantage of this service.

This thesis has examined different perspectives of this phenomenon, including the possible relation between the low-income population's interest in social media and Brazil's recent period of economic prosperity. Some analysts and scholars (such as Neri 2008, 2011) choose to refer to the emergence of a 'new middle class', presented as a positive outcome in a time of falling inequality – although in reality this is more like a new working class¹¹³. Using social media could be, and often was, considered to be one aspect of these Brazilians' effort to embrace modernity emulating the affluent. However, my thesis builds on Scalco's (2012:42-43) challenge for scholars to break away from the moralizing discourse surrounding internet access and socioeconomic exclusion and move away from an idealized view of the 'revolutionary internet', to pay attention to the other logics and uses that this low-income population have for being online. From this foundation, I have used my ethnography to propose and test analytical tools to further understand how these Brazilians see and use social media.

The point of conducting fifteen months of ethnography in a setting that deliberately differ from typical researches among affluent, educated, young-urbanites, is to show how the internet can, and does, mean different things to different people. For instance, news articles and books commonly discuss social media in relation to politics, empowerment of

¹¹³ See Souza, J. 2012. *Os batalhadores brasileiros: nova classe média ou nova classe trabalhadora?* Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG. See also Pochmann, M. 2012. *Nova classe média?: o trabalho na base de pirâmide social brasileira*. São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial.

the individual or the end of privacy. People in Balduino, on the other hand, often refer to social media's effects on personal relationships. Conversations may focus upon the 'addiction' to being online that locals are experiencing, reflecting the new possibilities of contact with relatives living away. Young people exhort the advantages of having a domain of interaction in which adults cannot participate as freely. Men relentlessly talk about Facebook in terms of new opportunities for secret communication with potential or actual lovers. People in general refer to Facebook and WhatsApp as platforms used by others to spy on their personal lives, and they also constantly use them to add unknowns as contacts. Finally, parents, particularly mothers, refer to the new difficulties of having to earn money and leave their children behind – a situation helped by social media, which allows them to maintain responsibilities to home and family while working away from the settlement for long hours on most days.

Part of the difficulty of observing these uses of social media relates to the socioeconomic and cultural distances between affluent and low-income Brazilians. The extensive work conducted by anthropologist Claudia Fonseca (2000) into low-income populations and class relations in Brazil describes the class distance separating the poor from the affluent, positing that 'to many Brazilians, the only moment of interclass contact are during conversations with domestic servants or during robberies. The barriers of three meters erected in front of affluent homes are like a metaphor of the almost insurmountable pit' separating these domains. In my case, being a Brazilian of affluent background meant that often, and especially during the initial months of fieldwork, I examined the uses and understandings about social media through my class-based moral references. For example, in the first six months living in Balduino I was troubled by several common practices. While I still was a stranger in the settlement, everyone I met gladly – and apparently naively – accepted my friendship requests on Facebook. Also, young people seemed proficient at using Facebook and knew how content filters worked, but they consistently did not understand the reasons for using them. So 'friending' people, I learned, was not really necessary to see the posts of people's in Balduino: everyone's timelines are public, revealing to anybody interested the inside of their homes, the faces of their relatives and friends, the places where they work and the celebrations in which they participate. As I tried to make sense of this lack of restrictions around the display of what appeared to be intimate aspects of people's lives, I concluded initially (and wrongly) that locals did not

appreciate the dangers of using social media. I assumed that they knew no better because they were inexperienced users and had had little education.

The problem with this early interpretation is that it relied firstly on a partial access to locals' social media and secondly on my own understanding of the terms 'private' and 'public'. Yet these did not correspond with the views of my informants. As chapter four explains with reference to intimacy, in a general sense 'everybody knows everybody' in the settlement, but there are nonetheless differences in the levels of intimacy that are shared. My perception of locals' use of social media changed after establishing bonds of trust that eventually led to my seeing something of the large amount of content which does not circulate on public-facing Facebook. There, timelines are actually meant to be seen outside of homes (not particularly by close friends and family members); they may be compared to a smart jacket or dress worn for a party or in church on Sundays. Far from being perceived as personal or intimate, what is presented on Facebook timelines often represents a way of displaying one's moral values and achievements.

It is not unique of low-income Brazilians to use social media to connect with relatives and neighbours they already see and interact with every day. Also, affluent and low-income individuals alike use social media to remain in touch with contacts they cannot interact with face-to-face regularly. A distinguishing aspect between these socioeconomic groups, however, is that my informants live in a socially dense environment in which locals are constantly near each other because of family or fictive-kin bonds and/or because they are physically close given the particularity of how houses are built being attached or close to each other. As I explain in chapter two, the historical and social background of Balduino resembles that of Afro-Caribbean populations that were the focus of research on the practice of indirection, which Brenneis (1986) describes as a strategy of communication in which the person speaking shares the responsibility for the understanding of a message with his or her audience. The key discovery from which this thesis evolves appears, for example, in the case of Margarete. This informant shares content on public-facing social media that only certain people can understand. Thus, indirection, a traditional aspect of local sociality, is also present in the ways that locals have interpreted and are using platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

The use of indirection on and offline relates to how networks of mutual help remain important in present day Balduino, despite the growth of the population and the expansion

of the presence of the state in the region. Locals remain interdependent to deal with everyday difficulties, hence the importance of learning to discuss sensitive issues in ways that avoids conflicts with other individuals and groups. I built this argument initially by noticing how locals fear being seen in the settlement interacting with non-related people of the other sex, to avoid the gossiping of a potential affair. Nevertheless, men talked recurrently and proudly about their extramarital affairs and romantic adventures. Similarly, locals often spoke about themselves and those close to them as being ‘honest and hardworking’, while bosses of businesses in the region talk continuously about having problems with employees that steal from their workplace. Such discrepancies between how a person presents him or herself and how he or she acts resemble, in Balduino, the geographical polarity between the Catholic church and *candomblé* yards that I discuss in chapters two and three: the former being central and visible and the latter being camouflaged and located peripherally.

The practice of indirection in speech is thus similar to how locals camouflage their morally unacceptable practices (such as *candomblé*) by hiding them from the collective eyes. In conversations, locals bypassed the attention of others nearby by extracting the intimate information that most do not know about. Certain geographic places also represent forms of intimacy as only certain people would know about certain locations, the routines related to these locations, and the people that are present at these places at certain times. The analytical notion of ‘lights on’ and ‘lights off’ presented in chapter three evolved from this insight and help examine local uses of social media. Public-facing Facebook timelines, seen through this perspective, are not spaces meant for exchange about topics of collective interest, but mainly domains people expose their submission to accepted values and norms. There they present themselves in ways such as believing in God, being a good parent, being honest and hardworking, being economically prosperous or having many friends. Complimentary, then, ‘lights off’ represents areas of reduced visibility in which locals can contest hegemonic values in ways such as being an accomplished lover, practicing *candomblé*, or by tricking others.

Indirection, a topic largely understudied in Brazilian anthropology, also relates more broadly with the ways locals exchange information related to sensitive events. As chapters two and three argue, there are categories of content that can be of collective interest, but these types of information are generally discussed or shared through face-to-

face conversations or direct online exchanges. The notion of ‘narrowcasting’ is useful to show, based on observing people discussing events such as crimes, the discrepancy between what people say as they meet on the streets and what they post on their timelines. When a car accident provoked the amputation of the arm of a child, locals spoke to each other for weeks about the matter, especially examining the responsibility of the driver. But in that same period very few references to the event appeared online. The practice of ‘sending *indiretas*’, allegedly the most common genre of social media posting among locals, equally evolved from traditional means of dealing with conflict.

Social media is constantly talked about locally as an ‘addiction’ that pushing locals to spend money and acquire knowledge in order to operate computers and navigate digital interfaces. In the final half of the conclusion, I will consider the ethnographic material presented through this thesis to point out the various motivations for social media becoming so important so rapidly in Balduino.

Different from the general expectation that social media is only a conduit for carrying modern values, chapters two to six show various motivations people have to use digital communication. This ethnography argues that the interest my informants have for being online cannot be explained only by framing the internet as a medium that challenges tradition and promotes modern interests. Social media has become a powerful domain for allowing people to push for changes in relation to individuality, education and gender relations while simultaneously being the means to resist changes. In the next pages, I will then review some of the aspirations, desires, limitations, resistances and clashing morals presented throughout the thesis, all of which make social media popular.

The simplest attraction social media produces in Balduino has to do with its economic advantages. Social media helps to reduce expenses, namely often costly mobile phone calls. Especially for adults, WhatsApp corresponds to a telephone that is free and allows for voice messages to be sent easily. As most of these families (if not all) have relatives living away, social media has become a cheap and efficient way of keeping in contact with them, including people in neighbouring settlements or nearby towns, as well as those living in distant parts of the country or occasionally abroad. Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates in chapters four and five that younger adult women now spend increasingly high amounts of time away from the home, whether for work, study or simply

running errands. For them, social media is economically convenient as a means for communicating with family members and other close peers while they are physically distant.

Being able to save money to communicate is of great importance. As the section on mobile phones and the Internet in chapter two shows, the people of Balduino can be very sophisticated when it comes to finding and sharing among themselves solutions to being online. They discover and share Wi-Fi connection passwords at work and at school; they share or rent their local Wi-Fi services at home to neighbours; they regulate their mobiles to upload larger files only when connected through Wi-Fi; and they are quick to assess the advantages and disadvantages of various alternatives of mobile data plans available on the market. The possibilities of audio and video conversations facilitate communication for those who have difficulty reading and writing. Social media is also more flexible than phone calls: it allows for more prolonged synchronous and asynchronous exchanges and for simultaneously speaking to various individuals and groups. Depending on the situation, a person can simply speak, or be silent and exchange files and texts that people around them cannot see.

Similar to its economic advantages are social media's symbolism as a particular indication of aspiration and progress. Using social media displays a person's desire to achieve and show to friends and family signs of socioeconomic distinction. Brazil experienced a period of political stability and economic growth during the 1990s until the mid-2010s, bringing positive consequences for low-income Brazilians in general. As chapter one shows, the national government's efforts to control inflation provided a background of prosperity that benefited the very poor in various ways, including through the implementation of successful welfare programmes. Coincidentally or not, this period of economic evolution coincides first with the arrival of commercial connectivity services (mid-1990s) and second with the growth in popularity of Orkut (mid-2000s), an early social media platform that became a national phenomenon among young Brazilians (Kugel 2006). This second moment is precisely when my informants in Balduino describe internet cafés opening in the settlement, and talk about the discoveries and experiments they began to have online.

In this context, it is not difficult to understand how the symbolism of social media, representing as it does modernity and progress, is part of locals' reasons for adopting it.

Working-class families in the settlement are able, for the first time, to use financial credit from banks to purchase items previously seen only on television or in the homes of affluent people. The modernity of social media relates first to its relatively high costs in terms of equipment and services needed. Thus computers, tablets and smartphones are like a new flat-screen television or a motorcycle – products often associated with local practices of conspicuous consumption. Informants talk about the effects of having a television in the 1980s, describing how local children would follow the delivery truck to the owners' home. Becoming involved with social media certainly projects a similar status of socioeconomic distinction that, in Balduino, relates to parents or relatives having bank accounts, another consequence of formal employment. Hence, among the low-income in and around Balduino, 2013 was the 'Christmas of tablets', as this product became a popular gift given to young people, who then used them conspicuously sitting in front of their homes as others passed by or, in the case of children, by playing on their new tablet as they sat inside the shopping cart as their parents were in the local supermarket.

Computers, tablets and smartphones are expensive items that locals have been finding ways to acquire since the late 2000s and early 2010s. Teenagers especially constantly discuss certain objects of prestige, such as clothing of a certain brand, but using social media extends beyond the symbolic fascination they share for these fashion products. The prestige of being online reflects, in part, a certain appreciation for education. Chapter five brings evidence that improved literacy has been an unexpected consequence of using social media, precisely because locals are under pressure to show online that they can write correctly. Education has thus become an element of distinction through social media, and a standard by which people are judged.

Young people see themselves and their peers as different from their older relatives due to their ability to use social media. A close informant once told me she would have doubts about cultivating friendships with people of her age who did not have Facebook accounts. To her, being on Facebook was not monetary matter as anybody in the settlement could afford to spend time at an internet café. To her and to other teenagers and young adults, the capacity to use social media indicates that someone has a modern mind-set and is not 'backward'. It also means that the person has the free time to play with social media. This availability of time reflects that the family has reached a certain socioeconomic level

which, in contrast to the traditional views about education (Kuznesof 1998), predisposes the family to support the decision of teenagers not to work while they are in school.

Another element associated with socioeconomic distinction is the incorporation of individualistic worldviews. Jonas, a teenager, explains in chapter six that having a university degree is not just about foreseeing a future with a better paid job. He sees himself as someone with a different perspective about life in relation to most of his peers at the local school, who he describes as being laid-back (*acomodados*) about their careers. Jonas wants to have his own place, meaning that he rejects the idea of moving out of his parents' home to live on a house in the same plot, surrounded by family members, as the majority of young people still do. This rising importance of individualism appears particularly in the interest locals have for mobile phones, which, in Balduino, is the first equipment locals have for accessing social media that is not shared with relatives and neighbours.

This interest in showing one's distinction through consumption and literacy taps into a debate about whether, as a consequence of national economic stability and government investment to reduce inequality, the low-income population have only expanded their possibility to buy things, rather than having actually moved 'upwards' in society. Yaccoub (2011), and Pochman (2012) and Almeida (2015) criticized the use of the term 'new middle class' (e.g. Neri 2008, 2011), arguing that the low-income population were not experiencing socioeconomic mobility. Neri's understanding of what it means to be middle-class is based only on earnings and disregards 'cultural values, and people's subjective experience' in relation other groups in society (Torresan 2012:115). However, although it is incorrect to refer to these Brazilians as middle class, their schooling and work ambitions signal that there has been an upward mobility from their peasant condition to what Souza (2012) called a 'new working class'. As chapter five explains, young locals now have distinctly higher levels of schooling than their older relatives, and their ambitions have also changed. While adult family members are predominantly functionally illiterate and use social media mainly to exchange visual and audio files, people under 30 years old make a point about using social media through writing and reading, because they reject the lack of schooling associated with 'backwardness'. Similarly, while older relatives speak of not wanting to have their lives controlled by bosses in jobs that they refer to as 'modern-day

slavery', the new generation, even those restricted to lower-paid jobs such as cooks, waiters and cleaners, see formal work as advantageous.

Not surprisingly, young people are conscious and speak about their interest for social media in relation to being able to communicate and coordinate actions outside of the view and control of their adult relatives. Chapter six broadens the discussion about indirection, pointing out how families promote norms based on young people's subordination to family hierarchies and act to impose the acceptance of their subaltern condition. In this context, social media is the place that can revert this subordination, as young people are the ones more experienced in using electronic equipment, navigating the internet and communicating using text. Also, through social media, young people are not as bound to the traditional channels and filters of the information that arrives from cities. Although Balduino is originally considered to be rural area, thanks to digital media locals can now connect with other urbanites, and be exposed to the same types of content circulating there.

Social media is also particularly valuable to the evangelical Christian groups in Balduino. As chapter six indicates, social media represents economic distinction and also a powerful tool for evangelizing. During a special event at the Assembly of God in the presence of a popular singer who had adopted Pentecostalism, most of the hundreds attending the ceremony were using their smartphones and tablets to record videos and take selfies during the service. These mobile devices exposed the economic status of their owners, who were often prospering local businessman and women or employees in better paid positions. Also, given how this group tends to have better literacy levels and ambition to prosper, many of the people who own small businesses related to digital technology (printing shops, mobile and computer repair establishments, services providing the installation of security cameras, etc.) are evangelicals.

Although in the past adult evangelicals talked about social media as a problem (related, for example, to the exposure of children to pornography), these parents now openly discuss new media as part of their strategies to protect their children from being in contact with non-evangelicals after school. For them, it is very difficult to forbid the offspring from being online so instead they use the interest in digital communication to keep them at home. Like some parents with better socioeconomic conditions, evangelicals

will say that they prefer to have their offspring at home, so they talk about making the effort to purchase a computer and hire a broadband service precisely to keep their children from being out of sight at internet cafés and in ‘bad company’.

Various cases presented throughout this thesis refer to the expectation that evangelicals should be able to read and have incentives within their social circle to finish at least high school. In chapter five, which describes the current status of public educational services in Balduino, we see how locals in general either despise going to school or treat this obligation pragmatically – as means of securing a diploma that enhances one’s chances of finding employment in the best-paying businesses. In chapter six, we see that evangelical families are the ones often supporting their children’s interest in pursuing a university degree. More than others, university students use social media to communicate with people beyond one’s traditional networks and beyond the physical limitations of the settlement. In this new context, being exposed to new relationships and to professional instruction, young evangelicals – especially women – have sought to reshape the stereotypes of evangelical Christians as materialistic, backward and fanatics, presenting themselves instead as intellectually and personally successful.

While, as chapter five argues, social media is not in general used by students to reduce their academic deficiencies, this actually happens to students that are evangelical Christians or from evangelical Christian families. While it is incorrect to broadly apply the term ‘new middle class’ to the income group often called ‘class C’¹¹⁴, it does apply to some young people that, having barely literate parents, are now professionals with university degrees. The settlement contains locals who opened offices there after studying law, odontology and physiotherapy, among other professions. Even those that have not yet found a job related to his or her university training, because of their academic degree, has access to administrative work that pays better and – an important mark of prestige – ‘does not make one tired’, meaning that the person performs intellectual rather than manual tasks.

The paragraphs above presented the more common arguments that associate the interest my informants have towards using digital technology with socioeconomic progress,

¹¹⁴ As chapter one explains, classes A to E are terms created based on earnings. Class C are the population with the intermediate family income in the country, between the rich (class A) and the most vulnerable (class E).

aspiration, distinction and, broadly speaking, modernity. Social media is the means for people to reduce expenses, to take a better paid job outside of the settlement while keeping in contact with one's offspring, and to display their new financial and educational conditions. But the ethnography also shows that social media helps people to accommodate rapid change by, for example, strengthening traditional networks of support.

Despite the previous arguments, and the evidence upon which they are based, it is misleading to look at social media's popularity only as a consequence of its practical advantages and of the economic improvement experienced by low-income Brazilians. Social media is useful in Balduino because it simultaneously allows people to adhere to pre-existing norms while making perhaps small but significant changes in terms of gender, sexuality, education and aspirations. It is the simultaneity that is important here. To my informants, social media use is located ambiguously at the edge between maintenance and change, between commitment with the collective and individual aspiration, the public sphere and the private domain.

This ambiguous identity appears, for example, in the Fonseca's (2000:89-112) notion of 'sandwiched living'. Like many of my informants in Balduino, those belonging to this stratum are effectively 'sandwiched' between the very poor, marginalised groups and the type of industrial working class that has already adopted affluent values, such as investment in education as a path for moving upwards in society. Similar to the examples Fonseca gives, I continually heard people in the settlement making comments such as: 'That family has cable TV in their homes, but the children at home don't have food on the table'. These observations position the speaker in a higher, more responsible and knowledgeable level, displaying their own standards and achievements. At the same time, looking at the visual posts in chapter three reveals the importance that locals attribute to displaying their social connections. This echoes a certain practice local teenagers have and that I describe in chapter four. Two or three friends arrange to go to school with exactly the same combination of clothes and fashion items (for example a Nike bag, a Cyclone T-shirt, an Adidas tennis shoe and a cap of the New York Yankees). As the 'sandwich living' framework suggests, locals are keen to distinguish themselves from the poor, while at the same time worry about being perceived as snobs and being consequently cut off from local networks of support. In short, locals may have experienced new levels of prosperity, but

they may also want to retain links with, and take advantage of, extended families and established networks of mutual help.

A possible explanation to ‘sandwiched living’ may be that, despite various new possibilities of material prosperity people began to enjoy, they do not feel secure outside of these networks. The impacts of Balduino becoming at the same time part of the metropolitan Salvador, an important touristic hub and consequently a magnet for work migrants, needs to be considered. Many of these changes are welcomed, especially by younger locals, but they come with new challenges.

What the ethnography shows over and over is that locals still depend upon their extended families and support networks within the settlement. These forms of mutual assistance (based on family, tradition or religious ties) have existed for generations, and have now acquired new value (e.g. to receive protection in the face of rising criminality). Social media represents new possibilities for keeping in touch with people independently of location or time. It helps people to remain participants in their networks during breaks from work or long hours of bus travel. By gossiping, advising on problems and sharing jokes and religious stories, they demonstrate mutual interest in, and availability for, each other. In a context in which violence is often used to resolve disputes, social media taps into a tradition of using gossiping to influence and attack reputations.

Many of the practices related to social media reflect the forms of communication that existed prior to the arrival of it. Hence the actual use of social media to remain in touch with locals while away from the settlement. Digital equipment also provides new solutions for enjoying secretive conversations while spying on others. Following tradition, Facebook is seen as a rich mine for new possibilities of sexual relationships and, echoing informal gender norms, women find in social media means to continue carrying for their offspring while they work outside of Balduino. Such uses are far from the common assumption that social media extends only individualist networks, as argued in much of social science literature (e.g. Castells 2011 and Rainie and Wellman 2012). In fact, social media is equally important in helping people preserve the social relations and support threatened by other modernising forces, which are concurrent with the advent of social media. Through exploring and analysing such consequences, this thesis comes to conclusions similar to other publications in the *Why We Post* series, for example Costa

(2016) and Miller et al. (2016), that the innovation of social media is simultaneously used to bolster forms of conservatism and to channel desires and aspirations of change.

Appendix

e-Research

The consequences electronic media have on research in the sciences and humanities have been addressed recently under to the topic of ‘e-research’ (Bulger et al. 2011; Eccles, Thelwall and Meyer 2012; Meyer and Schroeder 2015), defined as ‘the use of digital tools and data for the distributed and collaborative production of knowledge’ (Meyer and Schroder 2009, 2013). The possibilities these contributions examine include digital media expanding the means for collaboration; the widening of access to research data enabling the integration of research teams; the expanding possibilities of computers analysing quantitative data; the path digital media opens and also the bottlenecks that now exist to make research results accessible; and the advantages of incorporating the participation of people outside the realm of academia.

Considering how this PhD is an outcome of an experiment that used digital technology to carry out a multi-sited anthropological research based on comparison and collaboration¹¹⁵, I will report about the specific methodological choices enabling this type of model¹¹⁶. I hope to clarify some limitations this choice carries, but also to point to its advantages in relation to the 'lone wolf' way of researching that prevails among humanities scholars (Meyer and Schroder 2013:17) and that is also common in anthropology.

Miller (2015) has argued that limited resources available to research projects in anthropology might be impacting the choice scholars make to follow more parochial individualistic research agendas and interests. Researching as a 'lone wolf' undoubtedly has advantages, for example, some of my PhD colleagues changed the topic of their thesis during or even after fieldwork. Nonetheless, this model has its limitations: the researcher is mostly alone during the research, relying mostly on informal relationships to receive commentary from colleagues. For these cases, collaboration and comparison tends to happen only after results are published, but not during its preparation, fieldwork and the period of writing up.

Teamwork also has downsides. Having a group to work cooperatively and collaboratively from the start is not only more expensive and emotionally challenging; this model also imposes restrictions and demands on individuals. For example, here is a summary of these collective activities our research imposed: During the preparation for fieldwork, researchers divided their attention between looking at specific aspects of their field sites while also reading, discussing and making plans for the coordinated effort to happen during fieldwork. In this preparation, we collectively studied previous works about social media, coordinated how to apply tools collectively such as questionnaires and interviews, and defined a schedule of activities so we could be looking at similar themes in parallel. During fieldwork, each month we sent to each other by email reports of five thousand words that we then read¹¹⁷ and discussed through videoconferencing sessions.

¹¹⁵ The funding for my study came through a project called *Why We Post*, based at University College London. It intended to study social media in the field of anthropology using continuous team collaboration and comparison. My research happened concomitantly with the work of other eight anthropologists looking at the same subject but in other locations in South America, Caribbean, Europe, and various places in Asia.

¹¹⁶ For a more detailed description of our methodological choices, see: Miller et al. (2016:25-41)

¹¹⁷ Since our team included nine researchers, each month each of us read about 40 thousand words of reports.

Finally, after returning from the field, we worked together on comparative projects (e.g. Miller et al. 2016) but also worked on individual monographs that had the same chapters. This choice restricted the themes we could write about, but it also had rewards. Because we wrote about the same themes following a schedule, we could continue to exchange our drafts to offer and receive feedback¹¹⁸. Moreover, this method had unexpected positive individual consequences. As our researcher in Chile, Nell Haynes, noted in a private conversation: ‘reading the others’ chapters is sometimes even better than getting comments on my own chapter. Those are constructive, but reading the others’ chapters gives me creative inspiration. And it makes me realize important things I’ve left out’.

Collaboration and comparison are usually understood as separate practices. Our work as part of the *Why We Post* project showed that collaboration led the researcher towards comparison, which is positive as it allowed us to observe common patterns in the project. Another relevant consequence is that comparison helps the individual researchers understanding the specificities of their field sites. For example, one of the questions that my colleague Elisabetta Costa proposed to include on a survey related to how young women in Turkey would have to ask the authorization of their families to accept a friendship request on Facebook. I translated this question literally to Portuguese and, different from my expectation, many informants started to respond ‘yes’ to it. For this reason, I could ask them to elaborate on the subject and learned that their interpretation of the question was very different from its original meaning. As chapter four will explain further, in my field site it is normal for people that do not know each other to send and receive friendship requests to/from friends of friends. By responding affirmatively to this question formulated originally for places like Turkey and India, locals in Balduino were saying that once they got requests from people they did not know, they would ask mutual friends who that person was. Instead of authorization, these informants were asking for validation from their social circles. Like in other similar situations, cases related to other field sites mobilized my attention about an aspect of my own research.

Overall, the important conclusion from *Why We Post*’s methodological experiment is that individual, subjective aspects of the ethnographic work, including the long-term

¹¹⁸ Another useful result of having a series of books about social media with the same sequence of chapters is to allow readers to easily compare the results on specific themes in relation to different field sites.

immersion experience in the field, are not incompatible with collaborative and comparative projects.

Having the technical means to remain in contact with the research team during fieldwork is an important advantage for this type of experiment to become viable. Furthermore, the less parochial focus of group studies can have a positive impact on the audience for the various outcomes of the project¹¹⁹.

Methods

This ethnography results from a process of long-term immersion (Bernard 2011) between 2013 and 2014 in the daily lives of the people living in Balduino. I used classic anthropological methods as proposed by Malinowski (2015), which translates in short into cultivating trusting relationships with the aim of incorporating the worldviews of the people being studied. Consequently, I considered social media to not be the exclusive focus of this thesis but as something that mediates relationships that exist in a context. A result of this methodological choice was to cultivate bonds with people of different ages and not just with those that have abilities or experience in online sociality. Some of my informants were ‘heavy users’, some needed the help of their offspring to use social media, and some spoke about it only because it is a popular topic. Similarly, WhatsApp and Facebook were a recurrent subject of conversations I had in the field site, but I also talked about and asked questions about other topics independently of their association with social media (such as religion, celebrations, work, health and family) because they are relevant to my informants.

A similar study could have emerged from fieldwork carried out in a city’s low-income neighbourhood or in a *favela*, however, as I explain in chapter one, Balduino was ideal because, given its relatively small size, I could more easily follow people around as they went to the market, to school or attended church services. Although the settlement is increasingly more exposed to urban forms of violence, it is still a relatively safe place to live.

I left to do fieldwork knowing that my destination was the northern coastal area of Bahia (a choice I will also address in chapter one), but I had not yet decided the exact

¹¹⁹ Until March 2017, nine of a total of eleven books from the *Why We Post* had been released and the combined number of downloads was approximately 120,000. This does not include the number of titles sold in other digital or printed formats. Part of this impact results from UCL Press embracing open access publishing. Every book launched includes a free downloadable PDF available online with a Creative Commons license.

settlement to live there. I first stayed for three weeks at the home of a friend who lives by the coast. She is an architect and environmental activist who decided to move from São Paulo to that region of Bahia in the early 2000s. Balduíno is the settlement located across the road from where her house is, and, after a few exploratory visits, it seemed convenient for the aims of my research in terms of its size, the socioeconomic profile of its population, and also because my friend could show me the area and make initial introductions to people she employees and take me to shops that she visits as a customer. These initial contacts helped me find a provisory home there and snowballed into me meeting many other locals.

In the fifteen months of fieldwork, I combined methods such as interviews and surveys with a lot of time spent hanging out with people. I worked in different periods with four local research assistants, which intermediated the contact with most of the people that I interviewed and surveyed in the initial months of fieldwork. I conducted two surveys focused on social media uses and habits, in the beginning and at the end of the research, each collecting responses from about 150 participants. The first survey was useful to meet new people and to learn about the types of questions that locals did not understand or had an interpretation that was different from the intended; the second provided quantitative data to compare with assumptions formulated through qualitative methods¹²⁰. Furthermore, I recorded about fifty semi-structured interviews lasting in average from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Together with becoming important information sources to this monograph, they also provided material to create a series of short videos about the field site made available together with the *Why We Post* site¹²¹.

The idea of producing videos together with writing monographs and papers derived partly from the *Why We Post* dynamics of collaboration as we noticed the importance of YouTube¹²² as a learning resource, particularly in the cases of Industrial China, India and Brazil. Our team also acknowledged that detailed writing did not translate into the richness of the experience of living in these sites. This decision to make videos resonated with my own interested in YouTube (Spyer 2011), in experimenting with methodologies of video

¹²⁰ The results and analysis of these inter-site comparisons can be found in Miller et al. (2016: 42-69).

¹²¹ See: *Why We Post*, 2016. Ethnographic videos about the Brazil field site.

¹²² For example, the following work in the social sciences also discuss the importance of YouTube: Wesch (2008), Snickars and Vonderau (2009).

production using DIY¹²³ solutions (Spyer 2012, 2013a) and with observing the importance that producing and sharing audio-visual files had for my informants – which I discuss in chapter three. While writing this thesis has kept me in contact with the experiences and memories of fieldwork on an intellectual level, I have a different experience watching the videos I made during fieldwork. These two forms of delivering the findings of my research can be complementary. As Torresan (2011b:121) explains, synthesizing MacDougall's (1992, 1998) analysis, the possibility of integrating video with anthropological work adds to the stories presented solely via text. '[Images] may not contain the whole story, they may not tell everything, but the specific index/icon quality of cinematographic images provides us with a form of understanding ethnographic realities that is sensorial, direct, and immediate, while also imaginative and suggestive of wider arguments.'

The following paragraphs relate to aspects of conducting research on and about social media.

Choices to study social media use

During fieldwork, I 'friended' and was 'friended' by a total of about 250 people on Facebook. These were people I first met face-to-face and only then sent a friendship request. My proximity to them varied – I interacted with some regularly, I spoke occasionally with others, and I simply followed most through the content they posted on public-facing Facebook timelines. Then, in early 2014, as WhatsApp became a useful communication tool to a significant portion of the settlement, I also began using it extensively as a research tool. Most of the content that appears on the lights off section of chapter three came to me after I explained to closer informants that I would like to see what locals circulate using direct exchanges – including the content that, in their view, would not be pleasing to my affluent taste. I left the settlement having routine interactions on WhatsApp with about one hundred people. Also, thanks to WhatsApp and social media in general, after fieldwork ended, I carried on observing and interacting with locals, and contacted them on a few occasions to clarify or ask for further information about certain topics.

¹²³ 'Do it yourself' (DIY) refers to the choice of building, modifying, or repairing things without the direct aid of experts or professionals. In this case, I recorded video and audio using inexpensive point and shoot recorders and Apple's iMovie to edit the material.

In relation to different modalities of fieldwork on and about social media, I appreciate the relevance of anthropological research conducted exclusively online such as Boellstorff (2015) and Welsch (2008). My masters dissertation on YouTube's 'beauty gurus' (Spyer 2011) was based on participant-observation of people that had social relations among themselves exclusively through YouTube while living in different parts of the world. However, a similar methodological choice for this research would lead to different and probably equivocal results. I only entered local private-facing networks of exchange after months living in the settlement and I only had a clearer understanding of this practice, as chapters two and three describe, with the help of trusted informants and after knowing about the different forms of face-to-face communication and the different physical locations where they happen.

As the ethnography will hopefully prove, it was crucial to be in the settlement to be able to contrast the information circulating and locals' self-presentation on and offline, and to examine social media based on traditional values and forms of face-to-face communication. As I explain in chapters two and six, much of the conversations taking place on their social media relates to events happening in the locality. Some of the content that appears on Facebook timelines such as *indiretas* are fragments of dialogue happening inside social circles and they only make sense when combined with other bits of information coming from being there, participating in and witnessing local events.

Ethical issues

This research follows one general rule in relation to ethics: not to expose or endanger the people that contributed to it. The items below are common procedures that are now more necessary considering the particularities of online practices, including, for example, the fact that locals as a rule do not use content filters to restrict access to the information posted on public-facing social media. I took the following precautions during fieldwork and afterwards:

- I created an independent profile on Facebook from my personal account to conduct this research. On this research profile, I stated clearly my position as a researcher, the institution that I was associated with and explained my research interests. I also adjusted the privacy settings of this account in such a way that the profiles of my contacts would be hidden.

- Informants that participated in interviews authorized the use of its content by signing a consent form presented to them after the interview finished. In the cases of interviews with people under 18 years old, the consent was also signed by the parent or legal guardian.
- All the information that I used to produce this thesis has been thoroughly anonymized. This means that I have attributed new names to people and changed other information such as age and gender that could potentially lead to the identification of those involved. I also changed the names of places including that of the settlement itself.
- All images used have also been digitally altered to hide the identities of informants.

About citing research published in Portuguese

Given the focus of this study, throughout the thesis I draw from research produced in Brazil and published in Portuguese. I have translated all the citations that are not originally in English or available in English versions.

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¹²⁴ I cite this book extensively and could only use the PDF version, which is available online in here: <http://goo.gl/QL8iX1>. Because this PDF has a different page format than the original book and the PDF's pages are not numbered, I cite page numbers based on the actual number each page has in relation to the first.

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